THE SANITY OF MYSTICISM

G. E. HODGSON

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A STUDY OF RICHARD ROLLE

BY

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TO

AILEEN MORRISON,

WHO OFTEN WENT WITH ME IN

ROLLE'S COUNTRY.

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NOTE.

In the *Analecta Bollandiana* (tome 43, 1925, p. 208) the Bollandist Fathers, reviewing *The Minor Works of Richard Rolle,* published in 1923, wrote :—

> Nous comptions que Miss G. E. Hodgson, éditrice de la *Regula bene vivendi* de Richard Rolle, et auteur d'études sur les mystiques anglais, profitérait de l'occasion pour présenter au lecteur l'écrivain qu'elle traduit, en jetant quelque lumière sur sa biographie.

Unfortunately, authentic facts about Rolle's life are few. In attempting here to build up his environment, and in some sort to fit him into it, I have tried to carry out the Reverend Fathers' suggestion, "en jetant quelque lumière." More than that I could not hope to do.

G.E.H.

Easter, 1926.

FOREWORD.

RECENT CONDEMNATION OF MYSTICISM.

A THEORY seems to be growing up—in direct contradiction to the considered and documented view of competent theological scholars—that the *raison-d'être,* the real substance of Mysticism is unsound mentality, showing itself in hysterical extravagance, eroticism, in visions, trances, extreme asceticism; and, more unpleasantly and at least equally disastrously, in swollen, overweening vanity and pretentiousness. According to not a few modern writers these qualities are the whole content of Mysticism. It is an undeniable fact that using the term in its loosest sense some kind of Mysticism goes back to the beginning of Man's record. Apparently, it was born in the Far East, and had left its mark on Oriental Literatures before the Western World was sufficiently self-conscious, sufficiently aware of its possible future needs, to preserve its doings and thoughts in writing. It spread eventually to the Near East, for however accurate Dr. Driver may have been in describing the limited and specialised meaning of "Wisdom" among the Hebrews, as the "faculty of acute observation, shrewdness in discovery, cleverness of invention," yet these terms hardly cover Job's high estimate of Wisdom, still less the Son of Sirach's startling personification of it.

Neither does it seem to fit Socrates' conclusion, after his wistful search, in the *Meno,* when he fell back on "the only alternative" to knowledge, which, so he said a few lines further on, is being "inspired and possessed of God."

If Mysticism, in some form, is really so ancient, it seems strange that we should have to wait for the men of to-day, or rather for a few of them, to expound its

true nature, to exhibit its dangers and to scorn its claims. However, strangeness is no argument: and the only way to meet attack satisfactorily, is to marshal facts on the other side. But first, the attack should be reduced to as much precision as possible, or fighting becomes just beating the air.

In the *International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method,* whose avowed object "is to give expression in a convenient form and at a moderate price to the remarkable developments which have recently occurred in Psychology, and its allied sciences," Professor James Leuba of Bryn Mawr College has, in 1925, issued a book, called *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism.* He remarks in his Preface that "this book has been long in the making," which, taken by itself, might justify the supposition that it is a weighed and deliberate view of the matter. The volume itself makes rather a different impression, even suggesting some haphazard disconnection, as if it had been put together at different times out of materials gathered by more than one person. Some sentences in the Preface fit this possibility, so that perhaps, according to a practice not uncommon in American "Seminars," other workers have contributed results, hypotheses, views, which the professor has more or less combined. That is of no great consequence: the work must be taken as it stands, without groping anxiety about its method of coming into being. Professor Leuba carefully delimits its scope:—

> "The book is to be judged primarily as a psychological study of aspects of human nature conspicuous in mystical religion."

Though he nowhere defines the fashionable but elusive term "psychological," yet by his exposition of general scope and aim he justifies the reader in expecting a philosophic and scientific presentment of theory, based on carefully observed and appraised facts; an inquiry,—since the subject is so grave and vital—free altogether from what Locke called "unbottomed"

reasoning. This expectation is not always satisfied. Professor Leuba starts well, which some writers do not, by defining the word mystical :—

> "We shall take the term 'mystical' in a narrower sense, it will mean for us any experience taken by the experiencer to be a contact (not through the senses, but 'immediate,' intuitive) or union with a larger-than-self, be it called the World-Spirit, God, the Absolute, or otherwise."[1]

Commenting on this type of definition, Dom Cuthbert Butler wrote :—

> "The Mystic's claim is expressed by Christian Mystics as 'the experimental perception of God's presence and Being,' and especially 'union with God'—a union that is, not merely psychological, in conforming the will to God's will, but, it may be said, ontological, of the soul with God, spirit with Spirit."[2]

Perhaps after the Professor and the Priest, it may be interesting to recall the following definition offered by an able modern Literary Critic. The translation is from M. Rémy de Gourmont's essay on Maurice Maeterlinck's earlier work, of which the original may be found in the first volume of *Le Livre des Masques:*—

> "We may call Mysticism that condition of the soul which, having set the physical world aside, disdaining shocks and accidents, gives itself wholly up to direct communications with the Infinite. Now, the Infinite is changeless and one; souls are changing and numerous : one soul has not the same intercourse with God as its fellow souls have, and God, though changeless and one, modifies Himself to meet the longing of each of His creatures, and He does not tell this one what He tells that. Freedom is the reward of a soul raised to mysticism."

[1] *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism,* p. 1.
[2] *Western Mysticism,* p. 4.

In this description, the alert reader will discern the grandeur with the possible dangers of this condition: a combination ineluctable wherever individuality and liberty enter.

Being, it would seem, somewhat to seek in exact knowledge about the relations of Hellenic and Christian Mysticism, Professor Leuba shelves the matter with an obscure parallel :—

> " The Greeks placed the emphasis upon a transformation such as would make the worshipper immortal, whereas the Christian Mystic sought not primarily immortality but union with God."[3]

The connection between the two is not important to the present enquiry, which attempts to dissolve the charge that the mystic attitude always includes some element or elements of abnormality and disease. From this point of view, Professor Leuba's most important chapters are the fourth, *Historical and General Remarks on Christian Mysticism,* and the fifth, *The Motivation of Christian Mysticism.* This word of his coinage is as awkward as his treatment is defective. In the earlier chapter his challenge runs thus :—

> " Apart from a few recent publications "[4] "there is hardly anything in that voluminous production," (i.e., the literature of Mysticism), " deserving the attention of those who wish to know the truth; it is a literature of propaganda and of edification. The basal facts are presented in a fragmentary way and inaccurately, for the purpose of illustrat-

[3] *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism,* p. 49.

[4] Père Poulain's *Des Grâces d'Oraison,* Mgr. Farges' book, which has recently appeared in English as *Mystical Phenomena,* but was published in France in 1920, and Baron von Hügel's *Mystical Element in Religion* should hardly be referred to so airily, if Professor Leuba knew them. They appeared before his book was published, and performed perhaps rather more than he proposes. He occasionally mentions the first and the last Authors, so presumably has read their books.

ing traditional views or for the solace of afflicted souls."[5]

Had he made a first hand study of Mystics whom he mentions barely or not at all, e.g., Rolle himself, Dame Gertrude More, Ruysbroeck, or S. John of the Cross, he could, if he sincerely cares for that accuracy and scrupulousness which he takes for granted in a "scientifically trained person," hardly have written in this way. At any rate he has not learned from whatever training he has received, to abstain from grave charges unsupported by any evidence he brings. The general attack made in the following passage shows this recklessness of unsubstantiated statement :—

> "A warning should be added regarding a trait common in different degrees to all our Mystics. Their writings are marred by an inexactness approaching at times deliberate falsehood. This defect is due in the first instance to a strong natural tendency to exaggeration, intensified by hortatory and theoretical purposes."

After this misleading generalisation, he narrows his inquiry :—

> "We shall introduce the reader to Christian Mysticism by means of somewhat detailed accounts of several great exponents, Suso, S. Catherine of Genoa, Santa Theresa, Mme. Guyon and S. Marguerite Marie "[6]—

Saints not wholly unknown, after all, to a good many "readers." The names of other Mystics flit more or less irrelevantly across his pages, but it is upon these "detailed accounts" which often might more accurately be called misrepresentations, that he mainly relies. Misrepresentation is not too strong a word for the following observations about his selected examples. Of Suso, he writes :—

> "As Suso proceeds on his missionary errands, he is obviously in full possession of his critical

[5] Op. cit. p. 55. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

powers: and consciously self-determined,—even though he seeks to act, in accordance with God's will."[7]

Yet, on the whole, depreciate Suso as he may, he prefers him to the other four. Of S. Catherine of Genoa he writes:—

"This self-reliant person felt the need of the kind of comfort in spiritual and temporal matters to be gained from a devoted confessor. . . . . Is there not a significant discrepancy between the profession made by all the divine lovers that God and God alone is sufficient to them, and the bonds of close friendship and pure love most of them seem unable to avoid with at least some human being of the opposite sex."[8]

Even S. Teresa does not escape from these worse than innuendoes:—

"They, especially Santa Theresa wrote their biographies in order to magnify the goodness and power of the Lord. It will not betray any uncharitableness on our part if we add that it is a way of vicariously setting forth their own."[9]

Again, and with amazing misreading of facts and character, he allows himself to write:—

"Nearly all her life she had been flirting with the world from behind the nun's veil."[10]

The description of S. Marguerite-Marie is more obviously scandalous still:—

"It must be said in praise of the good sense of the monastery that during her novitiate much was done to put an end to her ecstasies, and her excessive mysticism. . . . In order to assuage the consuming fires of love, the Mother Superior sent her to the garden to take care of an ass and her colt. The remedy proved ineffective: the company

[7] Op. cit. p. 64.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

of the asses did not restrain her from seeking and finding that of God."[11]

If Professor Leuba had, or thought he had, any evidence which could in any degree justify his view, his way of expressing himself is indefensible, whether from the point of view of learning or reverence.

The soberer critics of Mysticism generally put Mme. de Guyon in a somewhat different category from the rest of the great Mystics: yet such a passage as Professor Leuba's is wholly unpardonable:—

> "Her return to divine favour is bound up in a very illuminating way with the birth of tender relations with a certain Fr. La Combe. . . Her peace was such that she felt the need of a particular word to describe it. She called it the 'Paix-Dieu.' Why not the 'Paix-La Combe'?"[12]

Those who best know and most venerate the Mystics have nothing to fear from "Science," nor from any student or inquirer who pursues his way on a genuine scientific method. But profane innuendo and unrepentant *parti pris* have never yet been accepted as legitimate scientific methods, and those are the methods which underlie not only the passages quoted but the whole book's main substance.

Professor Leuba justifies his selection of examples thus:—

> "The Mystics named above have been chosen for intensive analysis for two reasons: their experiences have been described with a degree of fulness that meets the minimum requirements of a psychological investigation, and they constitute the culmination of a great historical movement and represent Christian Mysticism in its most elaborate form."[13]

How the description of "experiences" by persons who, presently, are to be accused of "an inexactness

[11] Op. cit. p. 112.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

approaching at times deliberate falsehood" is to serve even as a minimum for psychological investigation, he does not explain, unless a liar and a mystic are equivalents; which seems a point of view to be established rather than assumed. Perhaps his own intuition seems to him so infallible and unfailing that he can detect truth from falsehood at sight. If he can, he fails to give his readers, or one of them, confidence in his powers.

Nor is it true that the mysticism of these selected Saints is more "elaborate" than that of many others: there is Ruysbroeck for example, or S. John of the Cross, or François de Sales, who might be mentioned, out of a multitude of others.

One more point deserves notice. In the fifth chapter, he remarks:—

> "Whatever particularity marks the mystics off from other persons is due to their education as much as to their temperament. Each one of those we are considering fell very early under two great ideals of monastic Christianity: self-surrender to God's will and chastity."[14]

This remarkable statement is very doubtfully true even of the Mystics he selected for dissection. If it were true of them, why, in a scientific inquiry, select persons all of one type and kind of upbringing? Of many other Mystics it is quite absurdly untrue. Richard Rolle, Fr. Augustine Baker, Sainte Chantal and plenty more are examples of Mystics who, started on what is called a worldly career, then of their own wills, without any human pressure, or even in opposition to such influence, turned their backs on their past ways.

It can hardly be entirely outside Professor Leuba's experience, since he is a student of Psychology, that some young people escape from or even vehemently react against their early environment. Probably none of those whom he mentions did that, not even S. Teresa: but all the same, a very large hypothesis cannot be

[14] Op. cit. p. 117.

stably built wholly on the imperiousness of early upbringing. Sometimes indeed, it dominates to the end; sometimes it is tempered by Youth's natural inclinations and bent; sometimes cataclysmal reaction follows; moreover, these diverse results from similar upbringing can be found, not seldom, among members of one and the same Family. The one thing no one can, so far, be sure of is what precise effect early education and instruction do have. In this chapter V., in spite of its wide title, it is of his carefully chosen Five, that he is thinking when he puts his first question :—*What do the Mystics want?*[15]

> Airily remarking that " we are all distressingly like the unfortunate asylum patient impelled in and out of season to wash his hands,"

he dismisses what he calls the Mystics' " traditional answer,"—viz., " God," on the ground that " the psychiatrist is aware of other promptings hidden to (sic.) the patient."

What, then, from his point of view, are the Mystics' motives? He catalogues them in this fashion, averring that singly, or in combination, they are the ground of mystical behaviour;—a tendency to self-affirmation; a need for self-esteem; a desire to find an object of devotion (personal or impersonal); need for affection and moral support; need for inner and outward peace; need for sensuous and sensual satisfaction. A list not wholly attractive. The " scientific " question, however, is, Do facts justify it?

The rest of this fifth chapter is occupied by an attempt—driving him eventually into such wresting of facts as occurs in his descriptions, already quoted, of selected Mystics,—to prove that these needs and tendencies which he enumerates as mystical "motives" amply account for the lives and conduct of those whom

[15] Op. cit. p. 116. In this discussion, he defines a phrase and a term. " Tendency to action means here an impulsion to behave in a particular way, while the term 'need' is used to designate a striving restlessness without specific direction."

he attacks and analyses. It does not, however, seem to occur to him that all such tendencies are to be found among crowds of men and women who are as far as it is possible to be from the mystical temperament. Nor does he appear to realise that they are capable of many different forms of gratification, some higher, some lower. Perhaps some further consideration of this line of his argument is worth while. An "investigator" who can reduce the sanctity, self-sacrifice and abounding charity of S. Francis to ambition is surely capable of any extravagant achievement of perversity :—

> " Francis of Assisi may be taken as representative of the group in point of ambition. . . . His position among the favourites of fortune was precarious, he had to swallow many a bitter rebuff. After a most painful experience, his pride wounded past healing by the contempt of those of whom he thought himself the equal, he made a *volte-face*. If the World would not feed his ambition, the Church and God would."[16]

In like fashion, he deals with other Saints, as, e.g., here :—

> " Similarly with Ignatius Loyola, when in consequence of the loss of a leg, a glorious career in the armies of his earthly sovereign had become impossible, he sought and found compensation in the service of God and the Church. . . . . The reader will recall that the desire to attract attention and to play a distinguished rôle is written large in the autobiographies of Santa Theresa and Mme. Guyon."[17]

Though to students aware of the facts, such criticism may seem not worthy of notice, yet many are quite unacquainted with the history of Mysticism, and with the lives and characters of even the great Saints. Moreover, in some quarters now, there is a noticeable disposition to accept, rather eagerly and hastily, any contradiction of hitherto accepted views; therefore it

[16] and [17] Op. cit. p. 121.

may not be lost labour to try to deal with this, by no means solitary, recent attack.

Not content with resolving sanctity into the first and most deadly of the Seven Capital Sins, root as it is of all spiritual and intellectual shortcomings, Professor Leuba strives, and at inordinate length, to trace the ecstasies of S. Teresa, Mme. Guyon and not a few others to another of the Seven, Sensuality. A remarkable instance occurs in his short "account" as he calls it of S. Teresa :—

> "One sacrifice she could not yet make : 'It was the giving up of certain friendships, very innocent in themselves, but for which I cared much.' One may very well suspect an attachment to a person of the opposite sex, more profound than she admits, deeper perhaps than she knew."

This hypothesis would fit his preconceived theory admirably, but S. Teresa's account gives him no aid. Professor Leuba did not quote from the Spanish original, but from an early edition of Père Marcel Bouix' translation of the *Autobiography of S. Teresa.* M. Jules Peyre subsequently amended this translation, because it was felt that Père Bouix had in some cases rather exaggerated the Saint's perfections, by changing a few of her words. M. Peyre therefore collated the translation with S. Teresa's original text : the following is a careful rendering of this particular passage :—

> "One sacrifice cost me more than the rest, namely, giving up certain friendships, very innocent in themselves, but very dear to me. Apart from that, it seemed to me that I could not renounce them without ingratitude : so I said to my confessor, seeing that these intimacies could in no way offend God, I did not see why I should show this ingratitude. He advised me to confide it all to God, for several days, and to repeat the hymn *Veni Creator,* in order that He might show me what it was best to do.
>
> One day, having remained long in prayer, and

> having implored the Lord to help me to please Him in everything, I began the hymn: while I was saying it, I fell into a rapture. . . . , I heard these words:—'I will have you converse no longer with mortals[18] but only with angels.' These words, I carried out precisely: since then I have never been able to form any friendship, nor to find pleasure in any individual affection, if it were not with people inspired by love to God and bent on serving Him. . . . God broke my fetters, He gave me strength to do what heretofore I had vainly attempted. I told my confessor, I left everything just as I was bidden: and a like decision did the utmost good to the person to whom I had been attached."

When it is remembered that S. Teresa belonged to one of the old, noble families of Spain, and, therefore, had that knowledge of the world which comes gradually, almost insensibly to people so placed, and further that she was temperamentally witty and wise, endowed too with a rare talent for practical affairs, and a penetrating judgment of men and things, surely it is a wilful wresting of speculation which detects a guilty love affair in a confession, made for the purpose of obtaining his counsel, to such a priest as Father Alvarez: a confession accompanied by the deliberate statement that these affections were "very innocent in themselves," "ties which in no way offended God?"

Their nature, so far as she gives any clue, is suggested in her statement that from that time onwards[19] she had friendships with none save "people inspired by love to God, and bent on serving Him." What were these "ties," which gratitude seemed to require her to keep intact, but those of friendship with some pleasant worldlings who had cared for the Saint—as worldlings have a trick of doing,—and who had shown her the ordinary kindness belonging to such friend-

[18] *hommes*, in the sense of human beings.
[19] The date was 1557. She died in 1582.

ships? Professor Leuba's suspicion, so unfortunately typical of his constant attitude, will surely not convince either the trained student, or the ordinary practical person of daily life? As to " Science " and the careful " investigation " of which he says so much, there is no connection between them and such innuendo.

If the characters of the great Saints are to be undermined and their reputations irrevocably tarnished, the ruin should be wrought not by the ingenious suspicion of a prejudiced mind but by indisputable facts. There are possible " Sources " which Professor Leuba has forgotten or neglected, one too, which in this case is particularly abundant. Letters to all and sundry, on every conceivable topic, are sometimes a livelier index to thought and character than even an Autobiography, just because they are spontaneous. S. Teresa's Correspondence is now accessible in English.[20] Throughout it, there runs an unquenchable vitality, wit and sound sense. There indeed lies a record of her friendships with every sort of person, men and women, young men and girls, priests, religious, laity, nobles and commoners, the King of Spain, Archbishops, Bishops, dignitaries of all descriptions. There can be felt, still, her gratitude for kindnesses shown to her, to her Community, some small enough in themselves, but still remembered warmly; her fine courtesy, her inextinguishable fortitude, her gaiety, her sane and critical outlook on the World and its wayward doings. Taken altogether, these make a picture to which Professor Leuba's repulsive caricature bears no resemblance whatever.

However, since he could so misinterpret the *Autobiography,* the spirit of the Letters might have escaped

[20] A complete edition of S. Teresa's Letters has been translated from the Spanish, with annotations, by the Benedictines of Stanbrook, and published by Thomas Baker, London, 1919—1924. Another " source," *The Interior Castle,* Professor Leuba can never have looked into. If he has, the only possible conclusion is that he is incapable even of beginning to understand S. Teresa.

him as completely. His last words in his chapter on The Motivation of Christian Mysticism are these :—

> "We know that before entering on a holy life, our Mystics were not content with existence as it was for them; they felt needs that were not satisfied, and conceived ideals that could not be realised. Some of them were cruelly wounded in their self esteem, and though married were denied the spiritual as well as the physiological satisfaction of intimate companionship with a person admired, loved and loving. In the Mystical Union they found a Presence that satisfied the desires for self esteem and for self affirmation, for affection and for self-surrender, for intellectual harmony and for moral perfection. They found or thought they had found the fulfilment of all their yearnings. And when they had returned to normal consciousness, they rejoiced in the momentous assurance of God's love and in the presence of his constant companionship."

In fine, Professor Leuba resolves the mystic state into undiluted selfishness, striving for every physical, moral and intellectual satisfaction which it can desire. Perhaps his view springs from his tacit assumption—of whose full consequences he seems partially unconscious—that there is no God, and that indeed there is no man in our usual sense of the words; only some strange psychological contrivance, though whence and how, he fails to show; and, therefore, naturally there is no possibility of effectual contact between two non-existences. If, even for the purpose only of a working hypothesis, he could revise those assumptions, then possibly the total meaning of personality, which now seems shut away from him, might open to him.

The "Divine Pursuer" is no merely modern conception. It is recurrent throughout human thought, though it was left to Francis Thompson to familiarise almost the "General Reader," though apparently not Professor Leuba, with it.

Concealed often from the ultra-intellectualist, though not from him alone, the things of the Spirit—it is a platitude—are not seldom revealed to the World's "charcoal-burners." It is a familiar fact that while the shepherds needed but to cross a field or two, the Wise Men had to journey far to find the Light. The Divine Pursuer haunts all kinds of men and women. *The Hound of Heaven* is too well known to need to be quoted: the theme of this Belgian poem, expounding with extreme simplicity the same "unhurrying chase," may be less familiar to some:—

> Le Seigneur dit à l'homme simple:
> Vous avez beau chercher la nuit,
> Souffler la lampe presque éteinte
> Et fuir au plus obscur réduit:
> Je ferai pénétrer ma lumière,
> Malgré vous, dans votre raison
> Comme, la nuit, la lune éclaire
> Votre maison!
>
> Le Seigneur dit à l'ignorant:
> Pourquoi fuyez-vous ma parole?
> Pourquoi nier le sens des paraboles?
> Vous vivez comme des enfants. [oreilles.
> Voilà que vous mettez les mains sur les
> Écoutez! entendez-vous ce bruit?
> Au bruit de l'océan pareil?
> C'est le murmure de l'Infini.[21]

Professor Leuba when he charges the Saints with pride and with some vice indistinguishable from self-advertisement, seems to overlook the difficulty, which always besets prominent people, of escaping from popular observation and discussion; and still more does he seem to forget that multitude of "unimportant" men and women whose mystic states have remained unnoticed and, therefore, unharassed. Had he chanced to read the second volume of *L'Histoire Littéraire du*

[21] *La Chanson des Pauvres.* Gregoire Le Roy. p. 74.

Sentiment Religieux en France—but M. Bremond's name does not occur in his List of Authors—he would have found accounts of mystical Lives which give a direct denial to his charges. One of these may serve as a type of the rest. M. Bremond writes of Marie de Valence, a girl of Dauphiné, married, very young, to a Calvinist lawyer, who soon left his bride a widow, in straitened circumstances. She had, during her short married life, turned to Catholicism. Soon, mystical experiences filled her life, and, more fortunate than S. Teresa, she immediately found a competent director, Père Coton. Of him, M. Bremond writes :—

> "Very flexible, broad-minded and with great respect for the liberty of souls, Père Coton had no desire to change the simple, ingenuous plan of life which Marie had chosen, without thinking much about it. She was not to leave Valence or the world: she was to go on just there in her obscure, peaceable little fashion. Known only to a few special and intimate friends, that humble, pure flame was to finish burning itself out in the dark."

She was a genuine mystic, and in her tiny circle was recognised as such. She was, too, a mystic of singular charm, and recollected radiance. Her biographer, Louis de la Rivière, remarks :—

> "As a matter of fact, Marie's raptures occurred in the most perfect calm and tranquillity, in absolute compunction and modesty. There were no convulsions, no tremors, no unbecoming gestures."

M. Bremond, quoting this passage, adds :—

> "Her illumination was not blinding. There was enough of the supernatural to affect every one gently, but not enough to upset anybody. The crowd venerated her, but without any fuss."[22]

In so unsensational a state of affairs, the Bryn Mawr Professor and psychologist could find little foothold

[22] Op. cit. p. 48.

for his attacks. A critic, so drastic in his challenge, should survey all parts of the field; and, too, he should weigh the varying influences of race, age, and individuality.

Had he done so, he might have found that none of his charges would lie in any general sense. From Dr. Freud to Professor Leuba, the tendency of the sex-obsessed School of Psychology is to over-confidence on slender grounds, to the too free and too vague use of such phrases as "it is now plain," "it is perfectly evident," "it is clearly obvious," in cases only too denuded of everything approaching logical proof, or even sound hypothesis. A student trained in the earlier, severe school of which James Ward was the main founder, can only stand immeasurably confounded with surprise at the loose assertions and flimsy surmises of some of these new-comers.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to describe the environment and circumstances, the apparent aim, method and general tenour of Richard Rolle.

Professor Leuba's main line of attack has been sufficiently indicated to enable readers of this account of Rolle to judge whether his charges could have been any more satisfactorily proved with this typically English Mystic than with the five of his choice.

One more Mystic may be remembered here. In a recently published, minute and careful study—*S. Jean de la Croix et la problème de l'Expérience Mystique*—M. Jean Baruzi has placed the profoundest and subtlest mystical possibilities so completely beyond cavil, that even Professor Leuba's gibes about "unscientific" treatment fall, empty and futile, to the ground.

M. Bremond once said: "dans la haute mystique il n'y pas de frontières."[23] That is true: but there are differences. These are fairly represented by the five selected for analysis by Professor Leuba, with the addition here suggested of S. John of the Cross and Rolle.

[23] "On the heights of mysticism frontiers vanish."

If his charges fail to fit any one of these seven, who fairly represent mystical life as it has been actually shown in the lives of men and women, then, the conclusion seems inevitable that he has not quite rightly understood the great company whom he set out to appraise and criticise.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCENES OF ROLLE'S BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE.

Non sum episcopus, nec praelatus, nec rector ecclesiarum, tamen solicitus sum pro ecclesia Dei.

—RICHARD ROLLE.

ABOUT 1300, before probably, Richard, the son of William Rolle was born; it is believed at Thornton-le-Dale, in the Vale of Pickering. In the eleventh century, the name of the village was Torentun; some say that the "Dale" only made its regular appearance in the nineteenth. Nevertheless, in the *North Riding Records*, published at intervals between 1894 and 1897, "Thorntondale wood" is mentioned as early as 1334.[1]

Recently, it has been suggested, apparently because it is so much nearer to one place with which Rolle, in his early years, was almost certainly familiar, that Thornton-le-Street, three miles north of Thirsk, on the high road to Northallerton, was really his birthplace. The temptation to accept this is that Topcliffe, connected usually with a determining episode in his life, is only fourteen miles away. It may be suggested that travelling was so difficult in the fourteenth century that, once started, a man might as well go forty as fourteen. There is proof that a Topcliffe man could poach in the Forest of Pickering and was fined: our forbears were hardy men, not easily turned from their purpose by obstacles.

Taking the older view, which in part at least rests on contemporary evidence, and for which—if nearness to other places is to be taken as evidence—it may be urged that it is not far from Yeddingham, with which Rolle in later life was undoubtedly connected, taking this older view that he was born at Thornton-le-Dale, a biographer is still not very much nearer to giving a

[1] Vol. IV., p. 41.

true and satisfying account of him. The established facts are so few.

To-day, Thornton lies, peacefully rural, delightfully picturesque, close to some of the most entrancing scenery to be found even in the beautiful North Riding. On the north of the Vale of Pickering there stretches, still unspoilt, the lonely, undulating, many-hued moorland, known at any rate as late as Elizabeth's reign, as Blackamore, bounded on the west by the Hambleton Hills—from Black Hambleton on the north-west corner down southwards to Roulston Scar, where almost at right angles, the hills turn eastward, forming with the lower Howardians the Moor's southern boundary. Eastwards it stretches almost to the North Sea. This great tract of Moors, with their intervening, wooded, cultivated Dales each with its own river, Ryedale, Bilsdale, Bransdale, Farndale, Rosedale, sweep up northwards, till they reach the Clevelands.

Thornton, a little to the east of the very ancient town of Pickering, lies just beyond Blackamore: yet, down its main street, alongside the high road, there flows the clear, shallow Thornton Beck, wandering on to join the Derwent; it comes down from the north of the Moor, where, like the Rye, with its tributaries the Seph, the Riccal, the Dove, Hutton Beck and the Seven, it rose: and whence all these "wine-dark" streams water the dales, which, with their lovely peace, divide these great wild moors one from another.

The name Blackamore, now unaccountably lost, existed in another form, at least as far back as Rolle's time: even in Henry VIII's reign Leland called it Blakmore: "the circuit of the Paroch of Pykeryng goith up to the very Browes of Blakmore."[2]

Rolle, in the fourteenth century, must have known it by names, which, according to the unstereotyped custom of his day, varied. These variations occur constantly in contemporary Records, for Blackamore and Pickering Forest together made a large part of the North

[2] John Leland, *Itinerary*, Vol. I., 70, 71.

Riding story; and we may well wonder how much Rolle knew at first hand, of the queer doings and lawless escapades recorded; even how far they coloured the resolutions which decided the main course of his life. For, though the great Inquiry held at Pickering in 1334 is one chief source of our knowledge of the district in the first half of the century, the doings recorded were doubtless nothing new.

When he was a young boy, an Inquiry was held in the 34 Edw. I. (1303), and when the boundary of a certain piece of land was in question, this moorland, north of the Vale of Pickering, is mentioned as

> "ab aqua de Dovve usque ad aquam de Syvene in mora de Blakehou."[3]

In some Exchequer Accounts of Edward II's reign (1323) the following entry occurs:—

> "xxiij jour Daugst a Egynton sur la more de Blakho. Paie a Monsieur Roger de Felton chivaler de la chaumbre le Roi pour paier sa raunscon en Escoce quant il fuist pris a Ryvaux en la compaignie le Conte de Rychemond en le moys Doctobre lan xvj de don par les meins Johan Harsyk liverant au dit Monsieur Roger les deners en la presence le Roi mesmes . . . cli."[4]

Presumably, "Monsieur Roger" had not, like his sovereign lord Edward II., made a successful if hasty flight from the Bruce's men.

In the Patent Rolls, 2. Edw. III. (1329) "Spaunton in Blakhoumore" is mentioned.[5] Lastingham is on Spaunton Moor.

The Coucher Book of the Duchy of Lancaster, important extracts from which are given in the North Riding Records, contains many references to this district: they have a social as well as a philological interest, giving hints of the world in which Rolle grew up. In May, 1335, before Richard de Willoughby, and

[3] *North Riding Records* (New Series), Vol. II., p. 235.
[4] *Ibid.* Vol. III., p. 224.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 266. Quoted.

John de Hambury, an Inquiry was held at Hackness "of offences and excesses committed within Pickering Forest by the Abbot" (of Whitby) "his men and tenants." The "Foresters" alleged and the "Verderers" eventually judged that:—

> "Stephanus filius Ricardi de Eskedale, Nicholaus le Taillour de Whiteby et Johannes de Moressom de Sneinthorp et alii ignoti die Mercurii proximo ante Pascha anno regni domini Regis nunc viij° venerunt in foresta ista loco qui vocatur Blakhedloundes cum arcubus et sagittis et leporariis et ibi bersaverunt et ceperunt sexaginta et sex cervos et bissas et carnes secum asportaverunt et voluntatem suam inde fecerunt, et capita novem predictarum cervorum et bissarum absciderunt et illa super baculos in mora fixerunt; et quod idem Stephanus anno predicto in Festo Corporis Christi et alii ignoti bersaverunt unam bissam in foresta predicta loco qui vocatur Everstiryng,[6] set carnes inde per forestarios recussi fuerunt; et quod idem Stephanus cum aliis multis anno predicto[7] in foresta ista loco qui vocatur Standebek et ibi cum duobus grossis canibus cepit unum cervum et carnes secum asportavit."[8]

[6] From *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 62, this appears to be Overstyrigg.
[7] 1332, *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 68.
[8] *N.R.R.*, Vol. IV., p. 7. In English, the story runs thus:—
"That Stephen, son of Richard of Eskedale, Nicholas the Tailor of Whitby, and John de Moorsholm of Sneaton Thorpe, and others unknown, on the Wednesday next before Easter in the 8th year of our Lord the King, hunted in the forest in the place called Blackedlands, with bows, arrows and grey-hounds, and there slew and took sixty-six harts and hinds, and carried them away and did their will with the carcases, and cut off the heads of nine of the aforesaid harts and hinds, and fixed them on stakes on the Moor: and that the same Stephen in the said year (1334) on the Feast of Corpus Christi and others unknown slew a hind in the said forest in a place called Overstyrigg: but the carcase was rescued by the Foresters: and that the same Stephen with many others, in the said year," (1332), "in the Forest, in the place called Sandbeck and there with two great hounds, did take a stag and carried away the carcase."

Obviously, in these escapades, Stephen was the ringleader, a sturdy persistent poacher, showing no regard even for the Church's Festivals. On the particular occasion, he was fined £2, Nicholas and John escaping at 13/4 apiece; which further suggests that he was considered the greater culprit. All were ordered to find sureties. *The Coucher Book,* in its lengthy list of fines for all kinds of misdemeanours, tells the end of the story:[9] Stephen's sureties were Hugh Sedman, John de Kirkby and four others. Those of Nicholas were Richard de Lythe and five others; John's sureties were those of Nicholas, except that this latter, quaintly enough, replaced Richard de Lythe. Perhaps Nicholas was allowed to go bail for John on the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief." That John and Nicholas were not far outstripped in zeal by "this same Stephen" seems likely from the fact that at the same time and place they were each fined 1/- for illicit "hare-hunting." After all, they erred in exalted company. The Abbot of Whitby, "a month after Easter," paid a fine of 3/3 for "vert taken in Goathland";[10] and £1 "for harbouring servants and greyhounds after poaching in the forest."[11] Thomas, Chaplain of Alexander de Bergh, paid 1/8 for hare-hunting in 1336;[12] a pastime he followed with knights and gentlemen whose fines were much heavier than his.[13] In view of all this, the fines demanded from the Prior of Bridlington must be regarded as imposed for really respectable offences: e.g., 13/4 for putting a sheepfold where he should not;[14] and £1 for possessing ten straying pigs.[15]

It may perhaps, since the word is still used with more than one meaning, be well to quote Mr. Turner's brief and clear description of an early "forest":—

> "In Mediæval England, a forest was a definite tract of land, within which a particular body of

[9] *N.R.R.,* Vol. IV., pp. 55, 56.
[10] *Ibid.,* p. 50.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 55.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 59.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 58.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 57.
[15] *Ibid.,* p. 60.

law was enforced, having for its object the preservation of certain animals, *ferae naturae*. Most of the forests were the property of the Crown, but from time to time the Kings alienated some of them to their subjects. Thus the forest of Pickering in Yorkshire and all those in the County of Lancaster were in the fourteenth century held by the Earls of Lancaster, who enforced the forest laws over them, just as the King did in his own forests. But though the King or a subject might be seized of a forest, he was not necessarily seized of all the land which it comprised. Other persons might possess lands within the bounds of a forest, but were not allowed the right of hunting or cutting trees at their will.

The history of the English forests may conveniently be divided into three periods, of which the first extended from the earliest time to 1217, the year of the granting of the Forest; the second from 1217 till 1301, when large tracts were disafforested by King Edward I.; and the third from 1301 till the present day."[16]

From various documents published in these *North Riding Records,* Pickering Lythe appears to have been a royal demesne at least from the time of the Conquest Settlement (for it was registered in Domesday Book) until Henry III. gave a large portion of land, in 1261, to his second son, Edmund Crouchback, creating him Earl of Lancaster. An earlier Pickering Castle than the one now in ruins, was included; "a formidable weapon in the hands of a turbulent baron."[17] In the 25. Edw. I. an Inquiry was made into the extent of the property held by Edmund, on the day of his death, "in the Wapentake of Pickering, Easingwold and Scalby." From this Inquiry it is plain "that at Pickering there is a dilapidated Castle producing no yearly

[16] *Select Pleas of the Forest.* Edited by G. J. Turner. Selden Society, No. 13. Introduction, pp. ix. and x.
[17] *N.R.R.,* Vol. I., p. xiv.

profit," and also that a good deal of the land might profitably be let out to farm. Perhaps the broken-down condition of the Castle made it a less dangerous stronghold than it had been, and so the King was not afraid to relinquish it. One personal detail, revealed at the Inquiry, shows Edmund in a pleasantly human light. One of the "Deductions" from his property is :—

> " item cuidam Sapiencie nutrici quondam domini Edmundi de dono predicti domini ad totam vitam suam xxs."[18].

In Domesday Book, Pickering Forest was described as 16 miles long and 4 broad.[19] This was not co-extensive with the later Pickering Lythe; for a large part to the east was called Scalby Forest, in the Domesday Survey: and this remained in the King's possession.

The lord Edmund died at Bayonne, in 1297, and was succeeded by his elder son, Thomas, who soon was leading the rebellious earls against Edward II., his cousin. In September, 1314, three months after Edward's defeat by Robert Bruce at Bannockburn, where Thomas, as a malcontent Earl was not fighting, Parliament was held at York. Thenceforward, Thomas was a thorn in the King's side, at times forcing him to dismiss his favourites. Mr. Turton, in his Introduction, suggests that venison from Pickering Forest may have helped Thomas to keep his followers together. If so, this lure eventually failed, and he was defeated in 1322 by Edward at Boroughbridge. He had not retained all his friends, and one Robert de Holland, whom he had sent to gather recruits, perceived that worldly wisdom dictated his own desertion to the King. After Thomas had been condemned and as a special favour merely beheaded—while some of his friends were hanged in chains at York—naturally

[18] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 230; "item, to one Sophia, formerly nurse to Lord Edmund, by gift of the said lord twenty shillings for her life."

[19] Quoted in *N.R.R.*, Vol. I., p. xviii.

his lands were forfeit, and anyhow he had no son. Eventually, his brother Henry was allowed to succeed to them.

Though a turbulent rebel to his sovereign, Thomas had lacked force to resist the Scots satisfactorily: the North Country, and with it Pickering Lythe, suffered considerably at their hands. It was under trying and harassing political conditions then that Rolle passed his early and middle years, though under Henry of Lancaster, who died in 1345, and under his successor, Henry, Earl of Derby, 4th Earl and 1st Duke of Lancaster, his last days may have been cast in rather more peaceful circumstances.

It is interesting to note that one John de Dalton was Thomas' Keeper of Pickering Castle, and fell with his master under the royal displeasure. An entry in the Exchequer Rolls of the 16. Ed. II. contains the King's Order to the Treasurer and Barons of the Exchequer to credit John de Dalton with 100 marks (£66 13s. 4d.), the fine imposed on him when as bailiff to Thomas of Lancaster he joined the rebels, the King's enemies: (" quod fuit inimicus et rebellis noster ").[20] In addition to paying his fine, he lost his office.

That he rebelled again with some activity appears from the statement in *The Coucher Book*:—" The bailiffs, foresters and verderers . . . . besieged Scarborough Castle with three hundred men clad in green jackets, who were arrayed and led by John de Dalton, then bailiff of Pickering."[21] John was Constable of the Castle and keeper of Pickering Forest for Earl Thomas for a good many years. Not a little of the conditions of life in Rolle's part of the country can be gleaned from the details of the Constable's doings. Certainly, he was zealous for his master. In 1306, he "obstructed the Abbot," (of Rievaulx) "for agisting animals in the Forest."[22]

Soon after Earl Thomas had possession of Pickering

[20] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 247. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[21] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 243.

Lythe, he granted the Manor of Foulbridge to John de Dalton for his life. This Manor, on the Derwent, a little east of Yeddingham, had belonged to the Templars before they were suppressed in 1308. A subsequent Act of Parliament is believed to have given Foulbridge to the Knights of S. John.

So energetic a man as John de Dalton was unlikely to live unattacked. Once, trouble arose over some fines which Thomas Wake, Lord of Liddell, alleged had been paid to the Constable's clerk, Roger le Long, who, in his turn, declared he had handed the money to John de Dalton. The latter said it was paid into the accounts of the reeve of Pickering, before Earl Thomas' auditors, and duly passed. For all that, decision in the matter was adjourned to the next sessions.[23]

In 1321, or 1332, one Nicholas, at the Bridge of Pickering, presented a Petition to Parliament pleading that John Dalton, "formerly bailiff of the Earl of Lancaster, at Pickering, wrongfully and under colour of his office," arrested Nicholas in the town of Pickering and threw him into prison for alleged arrears of payment and "other defaults." Nicholas asserted that he owed Earl Thomas neither money nor service, and that John acted "out of greed for his land." He was ordered to proceed in Chancery.[24]

Elsewhere in *The Coucher Book*,[25] there is a long account of charges brought against John, at the "Inquisition" at Brompton, in 1340, of taking venison. He pleaded that he had acted under Earl Thomas' orders, and had always sent the venison to the appointed persons. He admitted that once his greyhounds took two calves and two roe deer, "quos nullo modo ab eis rescutere potuit." For this mishap, he threw himself on the Earl's mercy. He denied having given away, as he was specially charged with doing, three hinds and two does.

[23] *N.R.R.*, Vol. III., p. 63. [25] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 121 et seq.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

After inquisition, the forest officials decided that the greyhound incident was, as he urged, an accident; that he never, while bailiff, took venison he had no claim upon for his own use, but that he did give away the said hinds and does, and for this he was fined £2.[26] His surety was Nicholas Gower: the fine, as paid, appears in *The Coucher Book* list. Whatever sympathy one may come to feel with John de Dalton, as one follows through *The Coucher Book* his chequered career of governing the castle and forest, leading "green jackets" in rebellion, rebutting false charges, and paying fines for just ones, it still does not seem possible that he could have been the "Squire" near Topcliffe, the friend of William and patron of William's son, Richard Rolle.

There was a small place called Dalton quite close to Topcliffe: its squire and Rolle's may have been another man of the same name. The distance between Thornton and Pickering on the East and Topcliffe and Dalton on the West certainly did not stop communication between them. At the "Inquisition" into the Forest affairs, held at Pickering in Oct., 1334, before Richard de Willoughby, Robert de Hungerford and John de Hambury, nearly 300 men were charged with catching hares with greyhounds in the Forest of Pickering "contrary to the assize of the Forest, and to the annoyance of the deer." These men came from all parts, from as far north as Danby (in Cleveland), Whitby, Scarborough and Nafferton; among them, from the west, appear the names of William, son of Thomas, and Thomas, son of Richard, millers of Dalton, and William of Topcliffe. Some of the accused appeared, some had been outlawed; some were dead. Among those who were not dead, because they were summoned in 1335, for their fines, and, not appearing, were ordered to be found and "kept safely" by the sheriff, was William the son of Thomas, miller of Dalton.[27]

[26] *N.R.R*, Vol. II., pp. 124, 125.
[27] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., pp. 44—46, and pp. 67—70.

Such were some of the ways and doings in Blackedlands and in the Forest and Honor of Pickering in Rolle's young days.

To-day, the north-eastern moors, unchanged from those far-off times at least in this that they are still enclosed by the Clevelands and Hambletons, are still bordered by the Vales of York and Pickering, and that the same singing streams—with their old names, the Rye, the Seven and the rest—wind among the moors, are still unique in England. They cover miles of country; they are surrounded but not cut through by railways. Their one high road (through Bilsdale) is not reckoned first-class by motorists; and some of their steeper, perilous, stone-strewn roads,—near Rolle's village too—have the blessed warning "Not for char-à-bancs." In parts they are still astonishingly remote, wild and incomparably lovely.

Seen from a distance, say from the road running from Ripon to N. Stainley, or better still, from the high points of the Ripon to Thirsk road, the Hambleton Hills gleam and shimmer with an iridescence of mingled colours,—of oolitic limestone, orange or grey, breaking out from the heather of every conceivable shade of purple and amethyst, or from the bronzing bracken—which recalls the Border Ballad:—

> "'O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills
> That the sun shines sweetly on?'
> 'O yon are the hills o' Heaven' he said,
> 'Where you will never win.'"

Yet, the wanderer who does win to them, may find them redolent still of their undying Past, dour and eerie beyond words. He may, often enough, stand struck stiff with the same kind of inexplicable terror which held Gray, the Poet, beneath Gordale Scar in Craven.[28] In stormy weather all the colours flee before the dense black shadows which sweep over the hills, and at all times they seem still alive with their violent,

[28] Cf. Gray's Journal to Dr. Wharton, Oct. 13, 1769.

kaleidoscopic past, when they were battle-fields, or precarious refuges for ill-doers and outlaws. These, if any are, are hills of romance; on one of them, the Hood Hill opposite Roulston Scar, legend declares "the Dowl" himself left his vast, indelible footprint. Like Wordsworth, "among the solitary hills," a wayfarer not utterly sunk in stolidity and materialism may well hear—

> "Low breathings . . . . . and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod."

If the wanderer finds his way to the south-eastern angle of these hills, to Roulston Scar—(round which, in 1318, the Bruce's men stole swiftly, secretly, to take Edward II., encamped as he was at Byland, in the rear, and drove the King, like one of the hunted forest stags, across country, till he just escaped into sheltering York)—hoping there to refresh himself with the sight of one of the loveliest of England's plains, the vast Vale of York, he still will not be freed from this strange haunting terror; for, far below, at his feet lies the wickedest of little lakes, Gormire, with its legend like Semmerwater's, of a city, sunk for its sins, in the mysterious depths. If he cannot see the lost community he can see the cruel surface, dead black at its centre, merging into deep indigo, and curling slyly on to the flat shore, with little steely waves more like oil than water.

The Blackamore country has always lain somewhat apart from Rolle's peaceful Thornton, but not too far for him to be well able to know it when he became a man and a wandering hermit.

The story of Thornton goes back behind the Conquest, for evidence exists that land was held there in separate manors by three men, Torbrand, Gospatrick and Tor. Twenty years after the coming of William, these manors had passed into the King's possession, becoming "with other lands soke" part of his manor

of Pickering. Though apparently absorbed, it appears that at first they constituted the greater part of the whole, being originally three carucates;[29] while the entire manor of Pickering, when they were added, was but five and a half carucates.

In the twelfth century, Thornton came into the hands of the Earl of Essex: after his death, so many people claimed it, that, apparently to end bickerings, Edward I., brushing the claimants aside, granted the Manor of Thornton to John de Eston. Presently, he obtained leave to give it away: then it passed from one to another, and eventually about four years after Rolle's birth, it was "conveyed" to a man who acted as trustee for the Latimer Family, who lived in the adjacent village, Sinnington, another manor dating from Saxon times.

A little later William le Latimer bought a house there, the land being measured in the then current, picturesque phrase, six ox-gangs. Finally, according to the account given in the *Victoria County History of Yorkshire,* in 1325, he entailed his whole manor of Thornton, with his larger and more important property, Danby (in Cleveland); and so things remained till nearly the close of the sixteenth century. This view seems to tally imperfectly with the facts recorded in the *North Riding Records,* which speak of legal connection between Thornton and Pickering Lythe in the fourteenth century. According to these Records, an Inquisition was held in 1. Ed. III. (i.e., 1327) after William Latimer's death. The part of the *Record* referring to his lands in Pickering Lythe, is defaced. An old copy of it, found in the Tower, declares that among other manors, he held those of Thornton and Sinnington and "granted them to his son, William le Latimer,

[29] A carucate varied according to the nature of the soil, and with the kind of tillage. It meant the area which could be ploughed in one year, with one plough and a team of eight oxen. The normal number of acres in a carucate, in English computation, varied from 144 to 96.

in tail, with remainder to his son, Thomas, in tail, with remainder to his son, Warren, in tail male with remainder to his own right heirs."[30]

This "Tower" copy may be inaccurate: but as Latimer's property is given correctly, for he did own the two said manors, there seems no particular reason why the legacy facts should be incorrect; unless the scribe did not know, and wrote what he thought probable.

To pass from the lord of the manor to his dependents, we may reflect that Rolle lived, as a boy, in that village life, at a time in our history when, according to Mr. G. G. Coulton, the peasant "was neither at his worst nor at his best."[31]

What precisely Thornton was like in Rolle's day must be largely a matter of conjecture. Mr. Gordon Home in his story of Pickering gives a sketch of an ancient cottage at Thornton. It is of the oldest type now to be found in the district of Pickering. It is fork-beamed, fifteenth century pattern, and not improbably older than the fifteenth. Entries for oak trees for "forks" occur often in N. Riding records.

Of the surroundings of Thornton, to the East and South, we know something at any rate of the great Churches in Rolle's day. Some of the most beautiful architecture in England lay within reach. York Minster was, as the crow flies, twenty-four miles away, and much further by any human means available then. By road, it is still 50 miles away. Ripon was further off. The great famous Church of Lastingham was comparatively close at hand. As far away again as Lastingham were the two Cistercian Abbeys, Rievaulx, rivalling if not surpassing Fountains, and, if possible, more fairly situated; and beautiful Byland. The latter to-day, is but a roofless, tenuous ghost, in a mere meadow under the wooded steep of Wass Bank: but 600 years ago, in its original beauty, it was a great

[30] *N.R.R.*, Vol. IV., p. 265.
[31] *The Mediæval Village*, by G. G. Coulton, p. 8.

House of prayer and worship through whose "superb west portal, kings, princes, all the chivalry of North and South as well, passed in or out."

Were a circle with a radius of 25 miles drawn from Thornton, all these save York and Ripon would lie within its circumference. Yet when in *The Fire of Love* Richard confessed "I have loved a certain wilderness, and I chose to live away from men," it would seem as if he preferred some withdrawn natural sanctuary in Blackamore above the Minsters and the Abbeys.

Even if he did, he must have knelt at some time in Rievaulx' stately nave. Perhaps after leaving its secluded valley of the Rye, he climbed some eleven hundred feet in the course of three or four miles northward, till at last from the height, now called Rievaulx Moor, he saw before him Bilsdale sweeping north to the jagged horizon line of the Clevelands as they run down westwards to meet Black Hambleton and Arden Moor, near Osmotherley. Even now the signs of civilisation are not obtrusive; and a wanderer with a fragment of imagination can blot out the high road and the few scattered farms, and leave himself with the stretch of dale, moors and hills much as it would have lain before Richard's eyes, some 600 years ago.

Early in the fourteenth century the Church of All Saints, at Thornton was rebuilt, the builders beginning at the Chancel and working westwards. In his youth, Rolle must have watched its restoration. It has not been ruined by restorers. The east window has three lights. On the north side of the Choir there is a window with two lights, and three similar to this, on the south side, as well as a "Low-side" window. All the glass, unfortunately, is modern. The Nave, supported on clustered pillars, has four bays. Apparently an altar stood beneath the eastern window of the south aisle, for the piscina remains in the south aisle wall. The Chancel arch is pointed, and the Belfry arch still

more sharply. Externally, it is a typical square-towered Yorkshire Parish Church, picturesquely crowning the top of the village main street. Such is the Church where Rolle's boyish prayers were said, where the foundations of his spiritual life were laid.

As has been shown, the *North Riding Records* give considerable information of the daily life, and specially perhaps of the wild escapades and misdemeanours of the inhabitants of Pickering. Thornton was near enough to come into the various "Inquiries," and sundry stories of Rolle's village in his own time can be found in *The Coucher Book*,[32] specially in the Inquiry held during Edward III's reign. Possibly Rolle was not born by 1293, though some scholars incline to that date: anyhow, the following vivid story belongs approximately to his time. The Foresters and Verderers of Pickering represented that on Sunday evening, April 5th, 1293:—

> "William de Everle, under the moonlight, held two grey-hounds, one white and one black, in the covert of Langhoudale near Lydegate, and with him was another clothed in russet, but his name is unknown. Alan Godericknеve came upon them, and the latter seeing Alan withdrew into the wood. The township of Thornton represents that Richard Russel took the hind, into whose capture inquisition was made, the aforesaid stranger being present, and carried it off and did what he would with it. Afterwards, inquisition was made and the fact established that he who was dressed in russet, who held the said greyhounds, was John de Rouceby." (Roxby.)

A single word, "outlawed" ends this tale. How the village of Thornton discovered the facts is not divulged. That the place was already one of some importance is shown by the fact that in 1334, an Inquiry was held there before a Steward and twelve jurors concerning the right ownership of some land.

[32] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., pp. 28—200.

During part of Rolle's lifetime, Thornton Church possessed a Rector and a Vicar. According to a list, which hangs now in the Church Porch, the Vicars were :—

1282. M. Tho. de Burton diac.
1304. Dns. Tho. de Ancotes, pbr.

The Rectors were :—

1267. Dns. Robert de Overleye vel Everley pbr.
1323. Dns. John de Everley (resigned for the Church of Skyrpenbeck).
1345. Dns. John de Ampleford cap. (resigned for the Church of Tyverington).

This does not quite tally with an entry in *The Coucher Book* (which after all was a Transcript of Forest Rolls, not an Ecclesiastical Register). This affirms that in 1305, Willo de Bergh " persone ecclesie Thornton " was one of thirteen sureties—another being Thomas de Rouceby, probably a relative of John of the last story—who were outlawed for not being able to produce one " John Burmer," who had flung " such large stones " at a hart that he killed it; carrying it away, subsequently, with the help of his boy, in his cart to his own barn.[33]

In the important " Regard " (or Inquiry) of 1334,[34] held " of the Forest of Pickering of Lord Henry, Earl of Lancaster," before Richard Willoughby, Robert Hungerford and John Hanbury, Justices in Eyre, " by the Regarders of the Forest charged to present all assarts " (encroachments on uncultivated land) " made therein, after the 28th day of October, 1217," these Regarders, whose business was to determine the Forest bounds, presented on oath a multitude of different charges which fill 150 pages of the second Volume of the *North Riding Records*. The following refer to Rolle's village, which seems to have done its share of encroaching and otherwise misbehaving itself. For example, its inhabitants stole wood from the Forest :—

[33] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 78. [34] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

> "Hindlackside Wood which was wasted of old and afterwards ransomed was lately despoiled to the amount of xld. by the township of Thornton, on the east side of the beck, to which township it is appurtenant. . . . The aforesaid township of Thornton acknowledged the aforesaid damage, and the aforesaid good for nothing township is to be amerced and the wood confiscated."[35]

After all, their Rector would seem to have been none too good an example in such matters. The Regarders declared, on oath, that

> "the woods of Ekkedale, Flaxdale on the south, and Willerdale on the north side, of old time wasted but redeemed, have recently been laid waste by William Latymer, now living, and by William Latymer who is dead, by William de Burgh, parson of the Church of Thornton, now dead, and by the townships of Thornton and Wilton and by Richard Russel." . . . . . "The same aforesaid, William Latymer, and Richard Russel and the townships of Thornton and Wilton, acknowledged the damage . . . and were amerced."[36]

It may be of interest to give the list from *The Coucher Book*[37] of these "Regarders" in 1334, Jurymen, so to speak, whose ordinary duty was to determine the Forest Bounds, but who were now specially charged to inquire into an accumulation of malpractices, by all and sundry—ecclesiastics, gentry, commonalty, both men and women,—spread over many past years. The Regarders were thirteen in number:—

William of Everley.
Roger le Long.
John Boye.
John, son of Alan.
Geoffrey de Kynthorp.

[35] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 179. [37] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

Thomas Thurnef.
Hugh de Neville.
Roger de Alvestan.
John, the son of Geoffrey.
Roger de Stapleton.
Roger Trutcok.
Ralph de Cloghton.
John de la Chimene.

In the account of the "Regard" held in 1334, where the list is also given, John is described as Son of Alan of Thornton, so he belonged to Rolle's Village. Roger is called de Alrestan, Ralph de Cloghton loses his surname, and John de la Chimene is omitted. That the latter was alive and present is suggested by the fact that his name appears in the Record of *Fines* imposed by the "Regard," for with John, son of Geoffrey, he paid 1/-; they acted as executors of the Will of Hugh, Vicar of Ebberston.[38]

That he may have died during the "Regard" seems possible from another entry:—

> "Thomas, Vicar of Thornton, deceased, took within the demesne a green oak, value ½d. John de Chimyne, successor to William de la Chimyne, one of his bail, is responsible. Fine 6d."[39]

Apparently Thornton made a practice of stealing wood. Here are two more charges brought against Rolle's birthplace by the Regarders:—

(1) "The wood of Langatdale, on the east of old wasted, was afresh despoiled in the middle of March by Beatrice of Hastings who is dead, William Latymer, and by the townships of Thornton on the west side, of Farmanby and Rouceby" (Roxby), "to which it is appurtenant."[40]

(2) "The wood of Langatdale on the west has lately been wasted and despoiled to the amount of xld., by sales made by William Eure, bailiff then, for

[38] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 49.
[39] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 25.
[40] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 182.

the lord's use, and in respect of fagots given to several men of Pickering, towards their allowance of dry wood taken by them on the king's moor by Pickering, and by the township of Pickering, and by the Dean of York, lately dead,[41] and by the Dean's men living in Pickering, and by the townships of Thornton on the west and Roxby and Farmandby."[42]

As usual, the delinquents owned their misdeeds, and were amerced, and the wood was seized. The details of these penalties are to be found in the list of fines, etc., paid, in consequence of the findings of this Regard, and are as follows:

(a) "3s. 4d. damages and 1s. 8d. from Thornton in respect of Hyndlakside wood."[43]

(b) "10s. damages from William Latymer, the townships of Thornton and Wilton, and Richard Russel, in respect of these woods, Ekedale, Flaxdale on the south and Willerdale, and the following fines, 2s. from William Latymer, 1s. 6d. from Thornton, 2s. from Wilton and 1s. from Richard Russel."[44]

(c) "6s. 8d. damages from William Latymer and the township of Thornton to the west of the beck, and of Farmandby in respect of the wood of Langhoudale, and 1s. fine from each township and 2s. from William Latimer."[45]

The details of the penalties for the damage on the east of Langatdale seem to have been omitted from this list of fines. As any student of human life might suppose, the women were no more innocent of this poaching and stealing than the men. There is a story of the theft, in July, 1311, of a hind by two lads, who unknown to the Vicar of Scalby, carried the carcase to the Vicarage where they skinned it. "Dionysia, the Vicar's maid, knew of the matter, and had part of the venison, and sent part as a gift to Emma Pinchon,

[41] Robert de Pickering, Dean of York, 1312—1332.
[42] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., pp.187, 188.
[43] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 41.
[44] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 41.
[45] *Ibid.*

laundress of Newley, and sent part to the Vicar's ploughmen for their dinner, when they went ploughing for the said Vicar."[46] Nor was mere love of sport the root, always, of this poaching. Sometimes personal vanity or possibly mere creature comfort, led to such stealing; thus :—

> "On the Saturday next to the feast of S. Luke the Evangelist, (1311), William, son of Henry and Adam, son of Ralph Rappat . . . came into the said forest[47] and set a snare in the courtyard of John, son of Alan de Thornton, and by that snare they took a 4 year old buck; and this same John had the flesh and skin, which skin this same John sold at York, and thereby bought some fur for his overcoat. All outlawed."[48]

The purpose of exhuming these escapades, indulged in, let it be remembered, by men and women of all classes and positions, is to bring back once again, as vividly as may be, that so-called dead past, the very atmosphere, moral and social, in which Rolle must have been brought up : so that, knowing as we do but few details of his individual life, we may trace, at least partially, from his writings, his response to his wild environment. The more we know of the latter, in daily detail, the less surprise he being what he was, there can be at his renunciation and escape.

It remains to relate what can be discovered of his physical surroundings. Mr. Turton points out that there were few parts of the N. Riding, lying east of the present main line from York to Edinburgh which "were not contained within the precincts of a forest... The forests of the Bruces, Stutevilles, de Ros's, de Mowbrays and de Mauleys, of Galtres, Whitby, Scalby and Pickering will exhaust almost the whole of the district."[49]

In the Second Volume, Mr. Turton has printed "A Booke of all the oulde Customes used in Pickering-lithe,

[46] *N.R.R*, Vol. II., p. 110.
[47] "Blackhowlands."
[48] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 107.
[49] *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. xvi.

time oute of memorie, and contenewed to this daye," a copy made in 1622, apparently of a book originally written in 1612. The transcriber is "Gawine Pollarde laite head constable of the libertie of Pickering-lith." It is short, occupying only twelve pages. Though it is written with an eye to current needs of forest laws in the later years of James I's reign, there seems no reason to suppose that it does not speak truly of "Pickering-lithe time out of memorie." If so, from it we can glean details of forest life, apart from man, in the time of Rolle. The Book sets down :—

"Certaine notes or markes whearby a Forest most propperlie maie be knowen by, and first what a Forrest is.

(1) A Forrest is a cartaine territorie of ground invironed round about with unremovable Markes or Bounders.

(2) Secondlie yt ought to be stored with { Vert and Venison.

(3) Thirdlie with all Beastes belongin to a Forrest.

(4) Fourthlie a Forreste doth { Forrest. Chaise. Parke. Warrant and Foule of Warrant. } containe a

Fifthlie it hath { Beastes of the Forrest. Beastes of the Chaise. Beastes of the Parke. Beastes of Warraint. Fowle of Warraint."[50]

The "vert," so far as it refers to forest trees, would appear to have been far less varied than it is now. It can hardly be doubted that oaks were far more numerous than any other species. Distinction seems to have been made between green-oaks and others, for in different transactions mention occurs now of

[50] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 2.

"2 saplings of green oak," and, soon after, of "5 oak saplings."[51] The trees were felled continually, and freely. Thus, while the Honor, Castle and Forest of Pickering, after its forfeiture by Earl Thomas, was in Edward II's possession, John Kilvington, Constable of the Castle and Forest, reported that by royal command 143 oaks had been felled to repair Scarborough Castle; and further, 300 oaks and 50 branches for the same purpose.[52] Earlier, Ralph Bigod, Forester-in-fee of the Forest was accused in 1282 of allowing 460 oaks to be felled in his bailiwick, he only having "warrant for underwood to the value of 2s."[53]

That oaks were the staple, but not the only trees, is shown by the phrase, fairly frequent in *The Coucher Book* "oaks and other trees." Oaks were used for the timbering of the local "fork-beamed" cottages. The word *pannage* (a charge sometimes imposed, sometimes remitted, for pasturing hogs on the forest acorns and beech-mast) occurs often in *The Coucher Book.* A fine of 5s. was imposed on Robert, son of Lambert "for five hogs . . . not agisted in the *mast* season."[54] There must have been a considerable quantity of beeches if there was a "mast season." This agistment was the payment of 1d. for every pig more than a year old, ½d. for every pig more than six months old, who were turned in to eat acorns or beech-mast, within the Forest. In some cases, payment was not exacted. The ash is believed to have been common in Pickering Forest, which was, after all, by far the largest of the royal forests of Yorkshire. Thorn trees are mentioned in Thomas Ughtred's *Account for Pickering Castle,* 13th March to Nov. 8th, 1332, and also in the accounts of the Templars' lands.[55] In many places, as in "Accounts," and also in *The Coucher Book,* nuts are mentioned, therefore, hazel trees must have grown in

[51] *N.R.R.*, Vol. IV., p. 60.
[52] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 130.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[54] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 45.
[55] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., pp. 200 and 205.

the Forest. The Rev. Dr. Cox, in his chapter on *Forestry* in the *Victoria County History* adds the alder.

At Langdon, Sir David de Rouclyffe was, to use the old term, "presented" because he had poached not only oaks, but "23 logs of willow and linden."[56] These, he wanted for a building in Pickering; if they grew in Pickering Forest it would seem to have been more convenient to steal them there, than to fare forth after them all the way to Goathland.

One other Forest product deserves to be remembered,—honey. In *The Coucher Book* we read that

> "Gilbert Ayton has taken honey found in his woods, and in the year 1334, some honey in two tree-trunks in his woods of Hutton Bushell and Troutsdale, about a gallon of honey and four pounds of wax; by what right is unknown."[57]

In the *Close Rolls*, 3. Ed. II., among many other orders dated 6th Feb., 1310, one directs that :—

> "It is to be seen if there be any honey in the forest, who had it and of right ought to have it, the Earl or another."[58]

At the "Regard" of 1334, Sir John de Meaux is mentioned as "paying to the earl an annual rent" (for the Lewisham Woods) "of 2s. and æries of falcons, merlins, and sparrow-hawks, and whatever honey is found in his woods at Lewisham."[59]

Thomas Wake of Liddell claimed various rights in his barony of Middleton, and among these, "to have æries of sparrow hawks and merlins in his woods, and bees, honey and millstones in his barony":[60] rather an odd assortment.

The "beastes" of the Forest are definitely mentioned. The distinction between two classes of them is quaintly made with the help of Ps. civ. :—"Thou maketh darkness that itt may be night wherein all the beastes of the Forrest do move." The writer goes on to explain that

[56] Duchy of Lancaster Forest Proceedings, II., 2.
[57] *N.R.R.*, Vol. II., p. 199.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[59] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 111.
[60] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 150.

"beastes of the chaise" go about their business in daylight, and do not live in the coverts; as may be proved . . . in the 18th verse of the same Psalm:—"The heigh hills are a refuge for the wilde beastes and so are the stony rocks for the conies." He then puts the creatures into their classes: doubtless Rolle knew most, or all of them. "Beasts of the Forest" were the hart, the hare, the bear and the wolf. "Beasts of the Chaise" were the buck, the roe, the fox and the mottrom.[61]

Red deer, half domesticated now-a-days in some Yorkshire Parks, are believed to be descended from the original wild ones in the Forests. "Beasts of Warrant" were the hare (which thus appears in two classes), the comy (coney), the "phessant," the "partridg." Grouse, flying ruddy brown over the heather to-day, are not mentioned in these lists. Of the wilder wild birds, still to be found, the Owls, the Curlew, the Golden Plover, the green Woodpecker, the rare Golden Eagle, the Kite, the Bustard, the Smew, nothing is said in these Records. Yet, as he sought and sat in that "Wilderness" he loved, Rolle must, at some time or other, have startled up these birds; and certainly must, many a time, have watched the lovely poise of the Windhover which still abounds in the district. The smaller wild birds were evidently abundant, as well as "game" proper.

In 1336, John Brokhunter (i.e., the Badger-hunter) paid a fine of 6d. for "catching partridges."[62]

Of "wild birds" we read twice over, when sundry persons were accused of and fined for catching birds

[61] Mr. Turton kindly tells me that mottrom is *marten*. The A.S. name was *meard*, apparently displaced by a Romance word. Mr. Turton found other forms, e.g., marterne or martron.

The pine-marten is not yet quite exterminated in Yorkshire though it is rarely found. One taken in 1900 measured 2 ft. 8 ins. from its nose to its tail tip.

[62] *N.R.R.*, Vol. IV., p. 60.

" with nets, birdlime and other contrivances in contravention of the assize of the forest."[63]

In 1334, John Poulterer and William Hope presented to the King as an offering from their master, Robert de Towton, " 2 hobbies," receiving in return a royal gift of 13s. 4d.[64] As the same name belongs to both, we cannot know whether these were two small horses, or a pair of destructive hobby-hawks. The size of the King's recognition of the gift, perhaps suggests the former.

In *The Coucher Book,* animals are mentioned as belonging to the forest which Gawine did not include in his Beastes of Forest, Chaise or Warrant. For instance, Gilbert de Ayton pleaded his right to hunt wild-cat and badger " within the Accredikes "[65] (a part of the manor of Brompton). The wild-cat is believed to be now entirely exterminated. Its final refuge was in the Hambleton Hills, and the last one is thought to have been taken on a farm up Murton Bank in 1848. On the other hand, badgers are still common, and recently one wanderer on the Pickering railway line was run over and killed by the Night Mail. He is said to have weighed 32 pounds.

Thomas Wake of Liddell (already mentioned) made a similar claim to hunt both of these within his barony of Middleton, which had one of its boundaries close to Thornton.[66] Harold de Percy claimed similarly for the Manor of Seamer; and he added the right to pull up heather on Seamer Moor.[67] This, together with an entry in *The Coucher Book,* of a fine of 3s. 4d., exacted from William Lambe " for burning bracken, heath and heather," on the forest,[68] shows that the vegetation has not changed since Rolle's days.

Gawine Pollarde was almost certainly transcribing from Marwood's *Treatise on the Forest Laws,* first published in 1598. Mr. Turner, in his Introduction to

[63] *N.R.R.*, Vol. III., pp. 22, 46.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[66] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 149.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 164.
[68] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 52.

the *Select Pleas of the Forest,* challenges Marwood's classification, followed by Pollarde; he writes:—

> "In the forests, the red deer and the fallow deer were strictly preserved as were also certain other animals. . . . . Marwood, in his *Treatise on the Forest Laws,* which was written at the end of the sixteenth century declared that there were five beasts of the forest, the hart, the hind, the hare, the wild boar and the wolf: in other words, the red deer, the hare, the wild boar and the wolf, the hart and the hind being respectively the male and female of the red deer. But although Marwood did not include the fallow deer in the class of beasts of the forest, he inserted it in another class with the fox, the marten and the roe, which he called beasts of the chase. The law, however, recognised no such distinction . . . and as the laws relating to the red deer were precisely the same as those relating to the fallow deer, both species ought to be placed in the same class.
>
> Again, Marwood's exclusion of the roe from the beasts of the forest, although true in his own time was not true of the period under our consideration. During the thirteenth century the roe was the subject of forest laws in all parts of England. But in the thirteenth year of Edward III., the Court of the King's Bench decided that the roe was not a beast of the forest but of the warren, on the ground that it drove away the other deer."[69]

The occasion of this decision was Henry de Percy's claim, in the forest eyre, among rights he demanded, "to hunt and take roes as well within the covert of the forest (i.e., of Pickering) as outside." The Earl of Lancaster challenged the right, and the justices in eyre referred it to the Court of the King's Bench, who made the decision already quoted; "given," as Mr. Turner says, "after consultation with the great officers

[69] Op. cit. pp. x. and xi.

of state, based not upon precedent or analogy, but upon the broad ground of practical convenience.[70]

The wild boar, Mr. Turner thinks, must have been very scarce. He says :—

> " Entries in the forest eyre rolls show that it belonged to the same class of animals as the red deer, the fallow deer and the roe ; but such entries occur seldom, and in many of the rolls of the great eyre which began in 1256, and extended over many counties, the wild boar is not mentioned at all."[71]

Mr. Turner says Marwood wrongly inserted two creatures among " the beasts of the forest " : the hare, which was only preserved in one forest[72] though it was protected by the law prohibiting " greyhounds and dogs " from entering the forests ; and the wolf, of which he writes :—

> " Marwood's inclusion of the wolf in the beasts of the forest was entirely unwarranted. The wolf is seldom mentioned in any of our public records ; and the passages in which we meet with it do not support his statement. From the thirteenth year of Henry II. a hunter received an annual allowance ; charged upon the sheriff's farm, for hunting wolves in the county of Worcester. . . . . By letters patent, dated 14th May, 1281, the King directed Peter Corbet to take and destroy all wolves in the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, Hereford, Salop and Stafford. In short, the wolf, so far from being in any way preserved, was treated as a noxious beast which ought to be exterminated."[73]

One more extract must suffice :—

> " 'A hunter who lived in the reign of Edward II., and at a later date became known as Twici, wrote a little tract in French, on the art of hunting. In

[70] Op. cit., p. xi.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. xii.
[72] The Warren of Somerton, Northants.
[73] Op. cit., p. xiii.

it, he states that the hart, the wolf, the boar and the hare are hunted in one way, and the buck, the doe, the fox and all other vermin in another,"[74] which once more seems rather to mix up these animals."

Reptiles, apparently, were of too small account for mention in such rough and hardy times. The far-stretching Moors must have harboured them then as now; adders are said still to be numerous, though it is possible to tramp the moors continually and never meet one. Locally, they are now called Ag-worms, a form of the Lancashire Hag-worm, a name which the *Dialect Dictionary* dates from the end of the eighteenth century: "H" is, of course, an inconstant variant, specially lately, for some 60 years ago it was not dropped in the Sussex vernacular. Add-worm has been heard at Witherslack, near Grange-over-Sands, as Dr. Leighton reports.[75]

An inhabitant of Lastingham recently insisted that Spaunton Moor harbours two kinds of venomous snakes, besides the "Agg-worm." Dr. Leighton urges that "the small red viper," (reported from widely separated counties of England and Wales, and plentiful in the New Forest), might "well be considered a distinct species."[76] Mr. Oxley Grabham, writing on Yorkshire reptiles says, "The writer has seen a beautiful red variety" (i.e., of the adder) "taken occasionally."[77]

Dr. Leighton, and this quite apart from the widely-ranging differences of colour which he records on p. 111, also says:—"Another variety of the viper is almost black, the line only showing in certain lights."[78] Probably these facts account for the alleged "three sorts." The two harmless English snakes are said not

[74] *Select Pleas of the Forest*, p. cxv.
[75] *British Serpents*, by Gerald R. Leighton, M.D.
[76] Op. cit., p. 9.
[77] *The Victoria County History*, Vol. I., p. 321.
[78] Op. cit. p. 265.

to occur on the North Riding Moors, but the smooth snake is found in the low-lying lands of the dales.

Rolle, whichever or all of them he met, calls the poisonous snake by its Middle-English name: "nedderis, snakis and tadis" is his list, in *The Three Arrows of Doomsday,* of uncomfortable reptiles. It is interesting to notice that in the cxlviii. Psalm, where Coverdale has "worms and feathered fowls," the Vulgate, "serpentes et volucres pinnatae," and Dr. Cheyne, who claims to render the Hebrew precisely, reads "creeping things and birds that fly,"[79] Rolle—supposing the Metrical Psalter to be his—renders it "nedderes, fogheles fethered als-swa." He would, of course, use the Vulgate: and apparently experience led him to translate "serpentes" as adders, without giving a thought to the others.

After the problem of his physical and social environment, the next natural question which arises is, who and what were his Parents? And, lastly, where and how was he educated? No answer which throws any satisfactory light seems possible to the first of these. His family name is not among the multiplicity of surnames which throng and recur in the *North Riding Records.* Dr. Horstman writes:—"The name, probably Norman, is not found in northern registers of the time."[80] Yet his father, William Rolle, must have been a person of some importance, for in *The Legenda,* he appears as the friend of John de Dalton:—"This squire loved his father as a friend with warm affection." (Lection III.)

The Legenda were composed, 32 years after Richard's death, as a part of the Office of Canonization which the Hampole nuns drew up, when it appeared likely that their Adviser might, as they so ardently hoped, be canonized. If they are partly drawn from his own two autobiographical works, the

[79] *The Book of the Psalms,* Vol. II., p. 240.
[80] *Richard Rolle of Hampole.* Library of Early English Writers. Vol. II., p. v.

early *Melum Contemplativorum,* written about 1326, and the *Incendium Amoris* which belongs to his later life in Richmondshire, yet they contain other facts and statements; this could hardly be otherwise, for there must have been many people alive in 1381 who had known him, and his life-story, quite well. But they tell next to nothing of his family, and give no help in solving the problem of this " Squire Dalton's " relation, if any, to the keeper of Pickering Castle, already mentioned, whose name was John de Dalton too.

The second question, of the manner of his early education, is not answered either in these *Legenda;* which only contain the brief, vague phrase :—

> " in due time, by the effort of his parents he was sent to be educated." (Lection I.)

Where? How? Beyond this meagre statement, nothing positive is known of his education in boyhood, though from his later activities something can be inferred. Something, however, is known about schools and educational possibilities in mediæval England; and not a little has been unearthed about these in the fourteenth century in Rolle's corner of the North Riding. A sketch of the possibilities in his neighbourhood is the only alternative to the sheer blank, heretofore left entirely unfilled.

Education began early in Christianised England. S. Augustine of Canterbury and his fellow monks were Benedictines, members of that great Order which from the first has cared for learning, literature and education. How far they founded schools for others than their own novices is not exactly known : but it would seem that Mr. Leach, who has done so much for the story of early English Schools, went too far when he asserted that after the eighth century, and even then not apart from Irish influence, the " monasteries were never schools, nor the monks educators, except of their own younger brethren. Their rules forbade them to be so."[81]

[81] *Educational Charters:* A. F. Leach, p. xiii.

There is no such prohibition in the *Holy Rule* of S. Benedict. Moreover, one of the most noted teachers of the tenth century, S. Ethelwold of Abingdon, of whom it is recorded that "it was ever sweet to him to teach little children," was a Benedictine. At the end of the tenth century, Aelfric, Abbot of Evesham, writing a Preface to his translations from Priscian's two Grammars,—[82]

"for you tender children into your own language," remarks of his own construing, which he thinks others may challenge,

> "I am content to do it as I learnt it in the school of the venerable Prelate, Ethelwold, who taught many the elements to good purpose."

The former Lord Abbot of Downside, Dom Cuthbert Butler, deals in his *Benedictine Monachism* with this question of external and internal schools. After observing that "a tract on the whole subject of Benedictine Schools, internal and external, would be a valuable contribution to Benedictine History," Dom Butler sums up the facts, so far known, as follows:—

> "I believe it would appear that cases of external schools, or at any rate schools to which external pupils, clerical or lay, were admitted, have at all times existed even though they were exceptions. It would be as far from the truth to suppose that such schools for 'externs' existed at all, or nearly all, the Benedictine monasteries, as to suppose that they did not exist at any of them."[83]

Of course, no one disputes that very early, schools were attached to Cathedrals and Collegiate Churches. But as Alfred, in a well known passage, sorrowfully proclaimed, early English education, books, buildings, teachers, were swept away by the Danes.

In the later mediæval schools, the "seven Liberal Arts," were the staple of education: that is, the

[82] Common text books through the Middle Ages, along with "Donatus."

[83] Op. cit., p. 326.

Trivium, which included Grammar—in the comprehensive mediæval sense,—Rhetoric and Logic; and the Quadrivium, consisting of arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. "Liberal Arts" they were as forming the training of free men; liberal also as contrasted with "illiberal" arts, which merely taught methods of gaining a material livelihood.

S. Augustine of Hippo in his small treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* had set forth the value of these Arts, insisting especially on the importance of Grammar. In the Middle Ages, the content of "Grammar" was considerable: it passed far beyond linguistic boundaries, and was applied to literature, to the æsthetic appreciation of literature, to metre and prosody, and to that miscellaneous mass of information, historical, mythological, archæological, geographical, artistic and all the rest, needed for the proper comprehension and annotation of literature.

The language most commonly taught was, of course, Latin. But as Dr. Sandys put it:—

> "The grammarian of the Middle Ages dealt with Latin as the living language of the Church and the Schools, and it was precisely because it was a living language that it departed further and further from the classical standard."[84]

The curriculum in England appears to have been based, on the whole, on this usual plan of the Liberal Arts. By a decree of Pope Eugenius in 826, it became the duty of all bishops everywhere,

> "to establish masters and teachers who shall assiduously teach Grammar Schools and the principles of the liberal arts."

In England both classic languages were learned. Before the Danish violence wrecked early English education, Archbishop Theodore and Abbot Hadrian had encouraged the study of Greek and Latin in a surprising way: and, from the end of the seventh century, there remains still Aldhelm's delightful letter to

[84] *A History of Classical Scholarship*, Vol. I., p. 642.

his Bishop, relating his struggles for learning. Probably, he owed his education more to Irish than to English teachers, but however that may be, his appetite was voracious. He desired "to explore Roman law to the marrow"; he tried "to digest the hundred kinds of metres into prose rules." He ended his letter with a description of his mathematical woes :—

> "As to the principles of arithmetic what shall be said? When the despair of doing sums oppressed my mind, so that all the previous labour spent on learning, whose most secret chamber I thought I knew already, seemed nothing; and, to use Jerome's expression, I, who before thought myself a past-master, began again to be a pupil, until the difficulty solved itself, and at last by God's grace, I grasped after incessant study the most difficult of all things, what they call fractions."

Such was early English learning; swept away by the Danes, and then later built up again gradually on the foundations laid by the patience and wisdom of S. Dunstan and S. Ethelwold.

In early days the North had its share of learned Benedictines; S. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, and S. Wilfrid of Ripon, in the seventh century, Alcuin (probably) in the eighth, and S. Aelred of Rievaulx in the twelfth. There were two great, so-called "reform" movements, in the Order, the Cluniac in the ninth and the Cistercian at the end of the eleventh.

Dom Butler points out that "the Cluniac movement was inimical to the schools, as it was to studies and to manual labour, and to everything except the Church services.[85] Cluny itself was a home of learning.

The Cistercian Reform aimed at restoring the Rule of S. Benedict in its original purity. The Rule, beyond prescribing "Holy Reading," made no definite provision for formal education, though it may be claimed that its texture, its religious and moral drift were, in

[85] *Benedictine Monachism*, p. 325.

the best sense of the word, educational, as I have tried to show elsewhere.[86] "Idleness," wrote S. Benedict, "is an enemy to the soul, and hence, at certain seasons, the brethren ought to occupy themselves in the labour of their hands and at others in holy reading."[87]

That the Cistercians cared for Learning and Art is proved by the number of them eminent in both, by their libraries, their writings, and their architecture; even if they were not schoolmasters.

Most of the great Yorkshire Abbeys are Cistercian, though Mount Grace is Carthusian. For this Order, making monastic life as solitary as they could, schools were not possible: but the Carthusians had libraries and could be scholars and writers, and often have been. Further, they were notable copyists of MSS., a work so vitally essential to education before printing was invented. The precise meaning of the sentence quoted already from the *Legenda*—"in due time, by the efforts of his parents, he was sent to be educated"—is a matter for speculation. Of course, in some cases a promising boy might be taught far beyond the elements which, in the tenth century, priests were required to teach the children of their parish.[88] For, Mr. Leach, in his *Educational Charters,*[89] not only quotes from a *Book of Ecclesiastical Laws,* whose origin may be a Council in 994, the demand "priests shall keep schools in the villages and teach little boys freely," which goes no further than Eadgar's Canon, but also another to this effect:—

> "Priests ought always to have schools of schoolmasters in their houses, and if one of the faithful desire to give his little ones to learning"

[86] *The Church Quarterly Review,* Jan., 1912.
[87] *The Holy Rule,* ch. xlviii.
[88] Thus the fifty-first of King Eadgar's Canons, (c. 960) runs:—"And we exhort priests to teach youth diligently, and to instruct them in crafts" (or trades) "that they may have church-aid."
[89] p. 37.

(instructio) "they ought willingly to receive them and teach them for nothing."

No doubt, some "little ones" of the faithful, gifted beyond the common ruck, did thus receive their early education from the learned priests who perceived their capacity to go beyond that small portion of education to which every little villager was entitled. But the scanty facts that remain indicate that the Rolles were more than indigent peasants; were comfortably circumstanced, and on friendly terms with the neighbouring gentry. Moreover, to hand their son to the parish priest is not accurately described in the phrase "by the *efforts* of his parents, he was *sent to be educated.*" The words fit the case better if they sent their son to what we should now call a secondary school.

What, then, were the educational chances, reasonably near at hand, open to a boy born at Thornton about the beginning of the fourteenth century?

In the second year of Edward VI., a Schools Continuance Warrant for the Duchy of Lancaster was issued by "Sir Walter Mildemay, Kt., and Robert Kelway, Esquier." Appointed by the King's Commission to inquire into existing schools, among others, they noted in 1548, "a gramer scole, etc., parishe of Pickaringe in the said County of Yorke, with the revenues of a gilde called the Lady Gilde, founded in the Church there." They add, "We therefore have appointed . . . that the said Grammer Scole in Pickering aforesaid, and that Richard Judson, schoolmaster there, shall bee and remaine in the same rowme . . . and have 35s."

"The Church there," is the still famous one of SS. Peter and Paul, for of its Saxon predecessor nothing remains but the shaft of a cross. In 1262, mention occurs of a Vicarage for Pickering. The present Church was built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, high on the slope of a hill, from which Rolle could have had even more uninterrupted sight of the Vale of Pickering to the south, and "Yon pleasant

hills," bordering the northern moors, than is possible now.

From Sir Walter Mildemay's Warrant, the fact escapes that Pickering School, whatever its date, was maintained by the Lady Gild. In this connection, other facts deserve notice. Among the mural paintings, an unique glory of Pickering Church, which may be earlier than the fifteenth century to which they are generally attributed, is a particularly elaborate one of the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, a subject less common in England than on the Continent. She is shown in the centre with the Persons of the Blessed Trinity around her. The Twelve Apostles are in groups on either side, and from the high rampart of Heaven, at the back, striking figures, surmised to be patriarchs and prophets, gaze down. This painting is on the north wall of the nave: opposite, between the clerestory windows, are mutilated paintings of her Death and Assumption. Pickering people, then, by their Lady Gild, by their maintenance through its means of their school, and by these mural paintings, would seem to show that they had a special devotion to our Lady.

In 1657, Viscountess Lumley, by deed-poll, founded charities in Pickering which consisted of Grammar Schools at Pickering and Thornton "now amalgamated." In 1905 or 1906, this amalgamated school was rebuilt at a cost of £5,000. It is interesting to find that the endowments consisted of 190 acres at Thirsk, 216 acres at Thornton-le-Dale (originally Thornton), and 5 acres or thereabouts at Wretton, together with the school-buildings, and "a field in Pickering in hand, old school buildings, a house and garden and about 14 acres in Pickering."

"Old school buildings"—how old? Did they exist in Richard's boyhood? Mr. Leach, in both his books, *English Schools at the Reformation* and *Mediæval Schools,* leaves this question unsolved. In the current prospectus[90] of Lady Lumley's Grammar School, the

[90] September, 1925.

following statement, which I quote with the Head-Master's permission, is made:—

> "Pickering Grammar School . . . . . was an Edward VI. Grammar School Foundation, but was probably based on a much older school founded in the fourteenth century."

Mr. Leach says Pickering had a pre-Reformation School, maintained by a gild.[91]

If this surmise be correct, the school may have existed in Rolle's life-time, even if not early enough for him to have been a pupil.

In 1909, the Board of Education made this foundation a secondary public school for boys and girls, with a preference to those born in or resident in the parishes of Sinnington, Thornton and Pickering.

Possibly all these details mean that Thornton's School was as old as Pickering's. Perhaps both were already founded in Rolle's childhood, though Mr. Leach seems to have discovered nothing about Thornton.

It must be remembered that exact information about schools before their destruction by Henry VIII., is difficult to collect, existing, as it does, in out-of-the-way places, sometimes only to be discerned in the faintest hints. Moreover, interest in such matters is modern.

The possible antiquity of the Pickering and Thornton Schools is perhaps made more likely by evidence that Helmsley, close by, did possess a school in the thirteenth century, for that shows some care for education in the district. The fact of its existence is proved by a thirteenth century document "conveying" a freehold estate, by one Christiana, "wife of the late schoolmaster at Helmsley, Yorks." This document has been preserved at Belvoir Castle.

Thornton, then as now, may have been, indeed probably was, of far less importance than Pickering. If so, its school, supposing it to have existed, may have been a "song-school," and Pickering's a "Grammar

[91] *Vict. County History of Yorkshire*, Vol. I., Article on Schools.

School," which names, very roughly speaking, correspond to our modern terms, elementary and secondary.

The next question is, what other schools could there have been in the more distant neighbourhood?

Many years before Rolle's birth, the monastery at Lastingham, founded by Cedd, when he came from Lindisfarne, had been swept away: there is no evidence either that Cedd set up a school. When in the eleventh century, King Stephen and the Whitby Monks set about restoring the monastery, they found themselves unable to finish and it became a Parish Church. Even if it had a school, it would offer small attraction as a "village school," to a comfortably-off family, living at Thornton, some twenty miles away.

The possibilities of Topcliffe, a manor held, in the fourteenth century, by the Percys of the King "in capite" cannot be overlooked, because a later incident, of no little importance in Rolle's life, is generally believed to have occurred there. Had Thorton-le-Street been, as some surmise, his birthplace, Topcliffe would have been convenient enough, but, being a few miles N.E. of Ripon, could not be accessible easily to Thorton-le-Dale, in those early days. Rolle later in life was at Oxford with the young Daltons, whose home was near Topcliffe, but there is no evidence that they were school-boys together.

The Chantry Commissioners of Edward VI. did find a school there, tracing its origin to a chantry in the Parish Church: the facts may be interesting to students of Rolle because of his passing connection with the place.

A Chantry, of course, was the endowment of a priest or priests to say Mass for the soul of the donor, or the soul or souls of persons selected by him. Naturally, such an endowment involved provision of a place where Mass could be said. Ordinarily, a space between Nave or Transept pillars was shut off, and an altar was erected within the enclosure. The two Chantry Chapels in Wells Cathedral, opposite to each other, in the ninth

bays of the Nave, one for Bishop Bubwith, the other for Hugh Sugar, the Cathedral's Treasurer, are beautiful, though rare, examples remaining now: happily rescued, in recent years, from serving as receptacles for brooms and pails, and restored to sacred uses.

Sometimes, a chantry was added to the Choir, and, occasionally, it was a separate building in the Churchyard. In the latter case, chantry chapels were often built in two stories, the lower one serving as the Chapel, while the chantry-priest used the upper as his dwelling, or sometimes as a school. The endowment of Chantries in England can be found in the middle of the eleventh century, but they did not become numerous till the fourteenth.

The Parish Church at Topcliffe, mentioned in Domesday Survey, was, for some reason, granted by one of the Percys "to the use of the fabric of the Cathedral of York." The grandson of this man, Richard de Percy, confirmed the grant on condition that the Dean of the moment, Roger de Lisle, should undertake "to supply a chaplain for the Chapel of the Blessed Mary in the Churchyard of Topcliffe Church." The Chantry, therefore, would appear to have been in the Churchyard; and it may have been one of which the upper part was used as a school. Documents concerned with papal taxation show that a Vicarage was "ordained" for Topcliffe at the end of the thirteenth century. That "Chapels" existed in this part of Yorkshire is clear. In the thirteenth century, there was a chapel at Rainton, close to Topcliffe, another, unendowed, whose date is not so certain, was founded at Dishforth, not two miles from Topcliffe. That a school existed in Topcliffe in 1519 is shown by the Will of John Fox, dated July 15th of that year, whereby he gave to the "scholars of the Parish at Topclif at his burial euery on of thame 1d."[92]

It is, therefore, pretty certain that schools existed at, and even about, Topcliffe in Rolle's life-time.

[92] *Victoria County History of Yorkshire,* Vol. I., p. 415.

Particulars of chantries in this part of Yorkshire can be found in Volume XCI. of the Surtees Society's Publications—*Yorkshire Chantry Certificates.* The Editor, in the Introduction, says :—

> "There is no instance in the Certificates here printed of a Chantry founded prior to the Conquest, although it would seem probable that such foundations would then have existed, seeing that prayers for the dead formed one of the principal provisions in the Ordinances of Anglo-Saxon Guilds."[93]

One of these Chantry Certificates deals with the Chantry in the Churchyard of Topcliffe Parish Church :—

> "The Chaunterye of our Lady in the Chapel wythin the Churche yarde of Topcliffe. Rychard Browne, incumbent. Founded by the erle of Northumberland and now of the presentment of the Churche of Yorke to pray for the founderes soule and all Crysten soules in the sayd Chapell, and the revenues thereof is employed to the use of the sayd incumbent.
>
> The same Chaunterye is within the churchyarde of the sayd parissche of Topcliffe."[94]

There were, as well, according to Certificates 103[95] and 106[96] two chantries within this Church. The first founded in Henry VII's reign is of course long posterior to Rolle, but the other, which is, too, the more interesting, as it touches on education, may have existed in his life-time :—

> "Our Lady Service or Guylde in the said Parysshe of Topcliff, John Ball incumbent. The same gulde is without foundacion. There is dyvers landes and ten, purchasyd, gyven and put

[93] Op. cit. p. vii.
[94] Certificate 104. Op. cit. p. 87.
[95] Vol. XCI. Surtees Society's Publications, *Yorkshire Chantry Certificates*, p. 86.
[96] *Ibid.* p. 88.

in feoffement towardes the fyndyng of the sayd pryste, and is bounde to say masse and to pray for the prosperytie of the parochienns, lyvyng, and for the soules of them departed, and further to kepe the queyer with vj chyldren all haly and festyvall days; which vj chyldren the same incumbent is bounde to teche to syng and to fynde proper song bokes for the servyce ther.

The same guilde is within the sayd paryssche churche of Toplyff. The necessite thereof is in singynge masse and other divyne service, and bryngynd up childer aforesayd."

Here, then, we have something very like, if not actually, a "song-school." Possibly the "bryngynd up" really refers to some further instruction as well as to training in conduct.

A Chantry Certificate (No. 104a) further mentions the "Chaunterye of Seynt Gyles in Elmore within the sayd Paryssche of Toplyffe": No. 105 refers to "The Chapell of Dyfforth within the sayd Parissche of Toplyff"; and No. 107 to the "Chaunterye of Service within the Manor of Toplyff." Of this latter it is said:—

"The same chaunterye is distant from the sayd parysshe Churche dimid.' mile. The necessite thereof is saing of mass within the sayd manor."

It may interest those reformers who nowadays desire to curtail their Rector's or Vicar's powers, to learn that at Dyfforth (Dishforth) near Topcliffe, for a chapel, "landes in feoffement" had been "gyven by certen well-disposed persons . . . towardes the fyndyng of a pryste, and to repayr the same chapel, the same incumbent beyng removable at the wyll of the sayd parochians."[97] It is to be hoped that the parochians were always as "well-disposed" as the original donors.

The "suppression" of these chantries was not always an easy undertaking. In the 37. Henry VIII., an Act

[97] Certificate 105.

was passed enabling the King to dispose of all colleges, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities, brotherhoods, guilds and stipendiary priests in England and Wales: the Preamble to the Act advocating the devotion of the proceeds from sales of Chantries to the expenses of the Scotch and French Wars. A subsequent Act of Edward VI. attempted, however, to put a less mercenary appearance on the matter by attacking the chantries on doctrinal grounds, as responsible for "devysing and phantasyng vain opinions of purgatory," and advocating the erection of Grammar Schools, the "augmenting the Universities," and provision for the poor and needy.

The Editor of this Volume of Chantry Certificates regarded these educational projects as "excellent," and seemed to regret that the proposals "were not long entertained." But the sturdy Yorkshire men of that day fancied that they knew theft when they saw it. In 1548, the inhabitants of Seamer,—at the junction of the Scarborough and Filey Roads, where in 1304 the Percys had a dower-house, in which they often stayed as a change from their favourite Topcliffe—made their protest. A band of them arose one night and dragged from their beds four men: Matthew White (one of the Commissioners), his wife's brother, "one Savage" (possibly York's sheriff of that name), and a servant of Sir Walter Mildemay, another Commissioner. They carried them on to the Wolds near Seamer, and there despatched them. The insurrection did not, of course, succeed, and in the following year the ringleaders were executed at York.

If some of the details taken from the *North Riding Records* give a dark picture of the religious and spiritual outlook of the dwellers in Pickering Lythe, these Chantry Certificates may bring a little light into the gloom. It is expressly stated, three times over, that in the Deanery of Ryedale, the Chantry Chapel was needed as the priest would help with the "houslyng people." In Helmsley, these were described as "many."

In New Malton (S. John Baptist) there were "CCCC houslyng[98] people and above"; in Old Malton "the nombre of CCC and above."

It may well be argued that even if Topcliffe had a school, and obviously it had one of some sort, nothing remains to show that it was of a sufficiently developed type to tempt the parents of a boy in Thornton. Much further from Rolle's village than Topcliffe, there were, of course, the opportunities offered by the Cathedral Schools of York and Ripon.

The praise of S. Peter's, York, which disputes priority of foundation with the King's School, Canterbury, was sung by its great Head Master, Alcuin, at the end of the eighth century:—

> "Bide with me for a while, I pray ye, youth of York, while I proceed to treat of him,[99] because here he often drenched your senses with nectar, pouring forth sweet juices from his honey-flowing bosom . . . he moistened thirsty hearts with diverse streams of teaching and the varied dews of learning, giving to these the art of the science of grammar, pouring on those the rivers of rhetoric. Some he polished on the whetstone of law, some he taught to sing together in Aeonian chant, making others play on the flute of Castaly, and run with the feet of lyric poets over the hills of Parnassus. Others the said master made to know the harmony of heaven, the labours of sun and moon, the five belts of the sky, the seven wandering stars, the laws of the constellations, their rising and setting, the motions of the air, the quaking of the sea and earth, the natures of men, cattle, fowls and beasts, the divers kinds of number, and various forms."

Then Alcuin passed on to the school itself, over which he presided until Charlemagne snatched him

[98] Certificates 143, 149, 151.
[99] Alcuin's own Master at York, Æthelbert.

away to the less tranquil surroundings of his own Palace School :—

> "There you will find the footsteps of the old fathers, whatever the Roman has of himself in the Latin world, or which illustrious Greece transmitted to the Latins, or which the Hebrew people drinks from the heavenly shower, or what Africa scatters with streaming torch.
>
> What father Jerome, what Hilary felt, and Ambrose the leader, likewise Augustine and S. Athanasius himself; what old Orosius set forth, whatever the chief Doctor Gregory teaches and Pope Leo; what Basil and Fulgentius, while Cassiodorus, Chrysostom and John shine too. Whatever Aldhelm and Bede, the Master, taught, what Victorinus wrote and Boethius too; the old Historians, Pompeius, Pliny, keen Aristotle himself, and the great rhetorician, Tully. Also what Sedulius, or what Juvencus himself sings; Alcimus and Clement,[100] Prosper, Paulinus, Arator. What Fortunatus and Lactantius bring forth; what Virgilius Maro, Statius, and the writer Lucan; or what the masters of the art of Grammar wrote, Phobus and Phocas, Donatus, Priscian, Servius, Euticius, Pompeius, Comminianus."[101]

Possibly, by Rolle's day, S. Peter's, York, may have grown more prosaic; but if he were a pupil there, how different from his forest home, distracted by the wild ways of its inhabitants, must it all have seemed to him, who had left the mountain and moorland ways to run "with the feet of lyric poets over the hills of Parnassus." After all, in later life, he showed not wholly inconsiderable poetic capacity.

Whether Alcuin was a priest, or even a deacon, is a disputed point: also whether he was a Benedictine. Charlemagne eventually made him Abbot of S.Martin's

[100] Clement of Alexandria. [101] Rolls Series, No. 71.

at Tours. Even so, some authorities maintain that he ruled as a "secular."

The Cathedral School of Ripon existed—in the circumstances, flourished is not quite the appropriate word—in Rolle's life-time. Its first appearance in history is rather unfortunate. In the year preceding Rolle's death, the sheriff, so Mr. Leach tells us,[102] was ordered, "as he had been ordered many times before," to arrest "Richard the Chamberlain, clerk, formerly master of the School-house of Ripon." One hundred and thirty-nine other persons, "priests, clerks, men and women," were involved in this charge of felony, "probably a riot." The sheriff could not find Richard, who was thereupon outlawed. We may hope this was not Rolle's Headmaster. It is hardly surprising that in 1380, when *Constitutions* for Ripon School were drawn up, it was enacted concerning the Schoolmaster:—

> "He must be of honest life and behaviour, and diligent in his attention to the profit of his scholars, as is incumbent on his office, if he wishes to escape fit punishment."

Mr. Leach further says that in 1534 "a tenement formerly in the tenure of the Schoolmaster," at a rent of 10d., was let to a chaplain for 2s. 1d. This tenement on the north side of the Churchyard is further described as "formerly in the tenure of Master Richard, rector of the grammar school." These facts are taken from rent rolls, belonging to the end of the fourteenth century. The Fabric Roll of 1380 mentions 6s. for rent of "a messuage in Annesgate,"[103] "in the tenure of Master Thomas, Skole-mayster."

Mr. Leach has remarked:—"That the Grammar School existed before and at the Conquest it would be absurd to doubt":[104] and he maintained that "there is

[102] *Mediæval Schools*, p. 200.
[103] Now, S. Agnesgate: the old pronunciation continuing.
[104] *Victoria County History of Yorkshire*, Vol. I., p. 430.

some positive testimony of its foundation by Athelstan."

It is perhaps idle to pursue the problem of Rolle's schooling further. Enough has been said to remove any sense of utter blank about educational possibilities, within not unreasonable distance of his home; to suggest, not what he did do, that is impossible on present evidence, but what he might have done.

That, in boyhood, he must have been taught, and not inadequately, somewhere, is shown plainly by the next stage of his career. In the fourteenth century boys of sufficient education proceeded to the University between the ages of 14 and 16. Of Richard, we are told, in *The Legenda,* that "When he was of adult age, Master Thomas Neville, at one time Archdeacon of Durham, honourably maintained him in the University of Oxford, where he made great progress."

His approximate age (and in his case the salient dates are all uncertain) when he left Oxford gives little clue to his age on entrance. The "Arts" Course lasted four years: there is no evidence that he finished it; none that he ever became a Bachelor.

His part of Yorkshire belonged mainly to the two great houses of Neville and Percy. Rolle's father was, we know, on friendly terms with John de Dalton, the Squire living near Topcliffe, probably a dependent of the Percys: it is likely, therefore, that the Rolles were of gentle birth. Thomas de Neville was about five years older than Richard, having been born between 1292 and 1295. He might have nearly or quite finished his Course in Arts before he sent Rolle to Oxford. He was made Archdeacon of Durham in 1334, when he was between 39 and 42. Possibly at the end of his Arts Course, he took the prescribed three years for his M.A.; if he desired further to be a Bachelor of Divinity seven more years were necessary, and a final two years if he took his Doctorate. Supposing that Thomas de Neville pursued all these courses, he must have spent sixteen years at Oxford.

Why he interested himself in Rolle is not known. From early days until Elizabeth's reign, the North Riding was divided into Richmondshire, Allertonshire, Cleveland and Blackamoor. In the fourteenth century, Allertonshire was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Durham. Though Rolle's home was in Cleveland, some scattered parts of Yorkshire were under Durham's rule, so there may have been some ecclesiastical tie. More simply and probably, the connection was one of friendship. The Daltons, Percys and Nevilles were known to one another: why should not John de Dalton's friend, William Rolle, know Thomas de Neville?

Oxford of the second decade of the fourteenth century, is less unknown to us than the state of North Riding Schools. Already, it ranked with the "great" European Universities. The Council of Vienne (1311—1313) spared time from its dealings with alleged heretics, to attend to reforming the Clergy and extending University Education. With respect to this last, the Council decreed the establishment of two teachers in each language, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Chaldee, at the Papal Court, and in the Universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca. When it is remembered that Bologna is possibly the oldest European University, and when its high reputation in the Middle Ages, and the supreme position of Paris and Salamanca are also considered, it would seem that Oxford had made great strides in learning, since the Council placed it next to Paris, in this list, and before the other two notable seats of learning.

When Rolle went up, Duns Scotus, the great English "Schoolman," and his chief opponent, Roger Bacon, had only recently died. In those slower-moving days, the influence of distinguished, scholarly teachers may have passed less quickly than it does now-a-days. In the great philosophical dispute over "Universals," which occupied the finest minds thoughout the thirteenth century, Duns Scotus is generally reckoned a

"Realist." As Dr. Horstman computed that "no fewer than 30,000 students had sat listening at the feet of the great master," it is obvious that his influence might have been potent still when Rolle entered the University. The other Franciscan, Roger Bacon, looked on this problem of knowledge from a different angle. Everyone knows he was a forerunner of the "scientific" philosophers. Not metaphysical speculation but empirical research attracted him. "There are two modes of knowing—by argument and by experience," so he declared: and he insisted that whatever individual preference might suggest, experience is, and must be, essential. Though Bacon did not present these "two modes" as alternatives, yet so slow are men in general to think synthetically, that time still had to elapse before they would realise the necessarily complementary nature of experience and argument. Indeed, they hardly realise it yet. Bacon had the trick of expounding facts inconveniently for opponents. Thus, he observed:—

> "It is impossible to obtain a perfect knowledge of the Scriptures without knowing Hebrew and Greek, and of philosophy without knowing Arabic as well. . . . There are not five men in Latin Christendom who are acquainted with the Hebrew, Greek and Arabic Grammar."[105]

If that much is true, the unfortunate fact remains that it is not all: even that rare stock of knowledge would not, by itself, suffice. Such equipment lies, one might say, on the material side. Equally necessary are other qualities: natural temperament, a cool judgment, and, perhaps even harder to come by, practised capacity of restraint, moral fairness, fine spirituality. One who will consider the whole case, must ask—"Who is sufficient for these things?"

Though Roger Bacon may have inadequately emphasised the need for intuition, for peculiar spiritual

[105] *Opus Majus.*

and moral equipment, without which the most perfect knowledge of divers tongues fails to unravel meaning, yet, like his Majorcan contemporary Ramón Lull, he was right and timely,—and only too embarrassing to his opponents,—in his insistence on the importance of a knowledge of the Arabic language, and of acquaintance with current Arabic knowledge and speculation. He suffered, no doubt, the common fate of those who, by being too far ahead, lose touch with their immediate neighbourhood.

Anyhow, Rolle was fortunate in finding himself at Oxford while great streams of thought were still flowing. In the development of Philosophy, as in the process of any other form of high human achievement there occur periods of sudden growth, accompanied by sharp conflict, which bring new systems into being. Interspersed, are spaces of more or less calm acquiescence, stages for recovery before a new advance. No student, happy enough to find himself at College in one of these moments of speculative and creative activity will ever quite lose the mark of it, impressed on his mental life at the instant of his greatest receptivity.

Whichever, if either, side of the "Universals" controversy, Rolle took, it is not unreasonable to surmise that his quality of vividness, his lively zeal, his searching phrases, his unerring aim owe at least something to his youthful wanderings over a mighty battlefield. Yet we know, from the *Legenda*, that his main interest did not lie in academic speculation: for it is distinctly said there—"He desired rather to be more fully and perfectly instructed in the theological doctrine of Holy Scripture, than in Physics or the study of secular knowledge."

Perhaps that over abrupt contrast sprang from Roger Bacon's insistent claim for science: or perhaps Rolle even failed to grasp the close connection between all sides of human speculation: the impossibility of cutting the mind and heart loose from one another,

the necessity at long last for a synthesis of all the seemingly so dissimilar parts.

The intellectual vitality of the century in which Rolle lived and worked is not universally recognised. The view that John Colet, in the sixteenth century, who had learned some Greek during his visit to Italy, was the pioneer of Biblical research and exegesis at Oxford proves that. Grosseteste, one of Oxford's most learned and distinguished mediæval Masters was, for some period in the early thirteenth century, head of the University. Even when he was a Bishop, Oxford was within his see. He helped to draw up those Statutes and Regulations which eventually contributed to the settlement of Oxford's academic aims and methods. Among these regulations, one requiring that the first morning lecture should be upon the Scriptures is attributed to him. What Grosseteste thus probably began, was developed by Roger Bacon, not only by his plea that an expounder of the Scriptures should be efficient in the tongues wherein they were originally written, but by his desire for the correction of errors in existing versions. He asked not only for a revision of S. Jerome's Vulgate, but urged that effective restraint should be put on contemporary copyists who tampered with received translations :—" Everyone," so he asserted in his *Opus Minus*, " presumes to change anything he does not understand—a thing he would not dare to do for the books of the classical poets."

With all his scientific enthusiasm then, Bacon had helped to encourage that study of " theological doctrine " which Rolle, as an undergraduate, desired; a wish which he must partly have realised during his Oxford residence. The least observant reader must perceive that he knew the Bible thoroughly, accurately.

That he was a good Latinist is equally apparent from the books he left. Some light is thrown on the adequacy of his school education, by the fact that he could not have been accepted at Oxford without a fair knowledge of the tongue of European learning,

familiarly spoken in the University, and the language in which lectures were delivered.

It should be remembered that knowledge of Greek declined in the West after the seventh century. It is believed that it almost died out in Northern Italy, though more knowledge of it lingered in the south, partly owing to the fact that four Popes, Theodore I. (642—649), John VI. (701—705), John VII. (707—707), and Zacharias (741—752) were all of Greek birth. Besides these, John V. (685—686) was a Syrian, and Sergius I. (687—701) though he was educated in Sicily, was born at Antioch, which suggests family relations with the East. In Gaul and Germany knowledge of Greek waned. In Ireland, after those happy fifth and sixth centuries when "the knowledge of Greek . . . was so widely diffused in the schools of Ireland, that if anyone knew Greek, it was assumed that he had come from that country,"[106] the eclipse followed, as elsewhere in the West. Greek was taught however in Charlemagne's Palace School, though even Alcuin's knowledge of it is thought to have been confined to a few words and phrases; not improbably acquired as quotations by Latin authors whom he did know well. Charles was diplomatically involved with the Byzantine Court: that may have served in some small way to keep alive the use of Greek. As for England, the fate of the learning fostered by Theodore of Tarsus, Hadrian, Aldhelm and Bede, is well known from Alfred's Lament over its decay. Not only did Greek disappear, but, for the time being, Latin almost vanished too.

During the ninth century, Erigena, Joannes Scotus, (really, John the Irishman) was probably the finest Greek scholar in the west. After him, the decline quickened, and became complete in the tenth, Baronius' "Age of gloom, iron and lead": though even in that dreary period such a Hellenist as Luitprand, Bishop of Cremona, may be found. That he was but "one

[106] Sandys: *History of Classical Scholarship*, Vol. I., p. 438.

swallow," seems probable, because when he used Greek phrases, he supplied their pronunciation in Latin characters.

The chief means of acquaintance with Greek literature through the immediately succeeding centuries was supplied by double translations,—Latin renderings of Arabic translations from Greek, generally made by scholarly Jews. Thus to the intrinsic and universal difficulty of rendering precisely the meaning and aroma of one language in another was added the extra liability to error consequent on the use of three languages, possibly by several transcribers. Yet, by this roundabout method, the Schoolmen found their way to the Greek poets, historians, and specially to the philosophers. Even the great twelfth century scholar, John of Salisbury, was no Grecian. Rolle, then, would find Latin a sufficient vehicle for the purposes of ordinary learning. Without doubt, Grosseteste encouraged the study of Greek, but how far his own knowledge of it went seems doubtful. Matthew Paris, in his *Historia Anglorum,* refers to him as *vir in Latino et Graeco peritissimus.* Roger Bacon, however, who was his pupil and revered him, asserted that he needed help in the translation of Greek: and the two statements cannot both be true. That Grosseteste was familiar with Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines is admitted. Roger Bacon, who wielded a winnowing fan, claimed that Edmund Rich, better known as S. Edmund of Abingdon, was the first Oxford teacher, in his own time, to expound Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi.* This has some interest, to a lover of Rolle, for the *Speculum Ecclesiae (The Mirror of S.Edmund)* was Edmund Rich's most important, original book. Of the two extant Middle-English versions of it, that in the Thornton MS. is, by many, thought to have been made by Rolle, who, in any case, plainly drew much from it. A question, to which no answer can be given, is, did he also study Aristotle under S. Edmund's guidance?

Roger Bacon attributed to Grosseteste a translation of Dionysius the Areopagite. Grosseteste's *Commentary* was included in a sixteenth century edition of the *Works of Dionysius.* The influence of the latter, traceable in the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing,* and, to some extent, in Walter Hilton, is not perceptible in Rolle, whose chosen authors seem to have been,—so far as he was indebted to others—S. Edmund of Abingdon, S. Bonaventura, S. Bernard, Richard and Hugh of Saint-Victor and S. Augustine.

True to his theological, rather than philosophical bias, Rolle, in his various writings, does show that he knew something of the writings of the early Christian Fathers and Doctors,—SS. Gregory, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Isidore: something too of the Fathers of the Desert, to wit Antony and Arsenius. All this knowledge he surely must have garnered in peace at Oxford: he hardly could have picked it up in the meanderings of his hermit life, which began so early; though he may have had some studious quiet at Hampole towards the end. Among the writings in the MS. Thornton, which do not actually bear Rolle's name, is a Middle English rendering of S.Bonaventura's *Privity of the Passion.* Though it is not usually attributed to Rolle, its language, its turns of phrase, its general style are curiously like his. S. Bonaventura—"who in contemplation was more than man"—wrote the *De Triplici Via,* often erroneously called *Incendium Amoris.* This latter title Rolle used for his account of the development of his own mystical life. That he knew S. Bernard's writings is suggested by his quotations from them, e.g., in *Our Daily Work.*

It has been claimed that he was indebted to Richard of S. Victor, whose *Benjamin Major* and *Benjamin Minor* were well known, in the twelfth century. The two men's methods of handling a similar matter differ widely: Richard of S. Victor is naturally philosophical, and addicted to symbolism too: while Rolle, and it is his peculiar characteristic, is his simple, practical, un-

alterable self, whether, in his early years, labouring under the heavy, provoking trials of persecution,—that "backbiting" which occasionally he condemned so fiercely,—or, later on, exhorting men to turn to righteousness, or, finally, sunning himself in the warmth of love.

Rolle was no conventional nor ready-made Saint: his dedication of his all to God was no man-directed thing. Gradually, he overcame a none-too-easy natural temper. He is at all times direct, almost matter-of-fact: he has the north-countryman's pawky sense of fun. To the end, in the saint the natural, winsome mortal survives, only directed now wholly to God.

Though Richard of S. Victor was a more complex person, yet in the shortened form of *Benjamin Minor,* which possibly was made by one of Richard Rolle's disciples, there is a passage which recalls one of Rolle's favourite warnings. In Henry Pepwell's sixteenth century rendering, it runs thus:—

> "Thou shalt call together thy thoughts and thy desires, and make of them a Church, and learn thee therein for to love only this good name of Jesus."

But the phrasing does not recall Rolle: surely his vivid quaintness has more persuasion, more driving power?—

> "Whoever will speed of his prayer, let him do what good he can; flee sin and call his heart home from the world, and keep it at home as the Gospel teaches; 'when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and shut thy door and pray to thy Father.' 'Enter,' he says, 'thy bed,' that is, 'call thine heart home,' and 'then fasten thy door'; i.e., 'hold thy wits in thee, that none go out.'"[107]

In the third part of this same little treatise, Rolle says:—

> "Many things hinder thee in toiling to pray: weariness of limbs; men thou meetest speak to

[107] *Our Daily Work.*

> thee; then thy five wits fleet out of ward, and then the devotion of him who prays cools."

In the stuff of their thought, there is this conspicuous difference. Richard of S. Victor distinguished "three parts" in contemplation. By the term *mentis elevatio,* he meant an expanded inner vision which, however, did not transcend natural human capacity. *Mentis sublevatio,* his second "part," did; for by that he signified a kind of contemplation beyond unassisted human reach. Finally, *mentis alienatio* is his name for the third "part," the highest form of contemplation, a condition of ecstatic rapture, wherein man's soul comes into immediate touch with Isaiah's *Deus absconditus.* It is the last step of that long, steep process, *the Ascent to God,* whose beginning S. John of the Cross, centuries after, described in a simple phrase:—

> "God is therefore hidden within the soul, and the true contemplative will seek Him there in love."[108]

Rolle could hardly have studied Richard of S. Victor's writings without knowing his fundamental teaching. If he were aware of the Victorine three-fold division of Contemplation, he went silently aside from it, following his own way; drawing, not from other men's books, but on his own experience:—

> "Contemplative life has two parts: a lower and a higher. The lower part is meditation of holy writing that is, God's word, and in other good thoughts and sweet that men have of the grace of God, about the love of Jesus Christ, and also in praising God in psalms and hymns and in prayers. The higher part of contemplation is beholding and yearning after the things of heaven and joy in the Holy Ghost; that men have oft although it be so that they be not praying with the

[108] *A Spiritual Canticle.* Stanza 1, § 7.

mouth, but only thinking of God and of the beauty of angels, and of holy souls."[109]

As his way is, Rolle sets forth his meaning so simply, without catching or pictorial words, that unexpectant readers may easily miss it. Yet, what Mystic can claim more than Rolle has hidden in these few, plain words?—

"The higher part of contemplation is beholding . . . the things of heaven . . that men have oft."

"Oft"! So, in a single word, he confesses to his ecstasies. Having in a short passage, sketched the purgative and illuminative Ways, he then, though still in the speech of daily use, turns once again to the unitive Way:—

"He makes them gather up their heart to them and fasten it only on Him, and opens to the eye of their souls the gates of heaven: and then the fire of love verily lies in their heart, and burns therein, and makes it clean from all earthly filth, and afterward they are contemplative men, and ravished in love. For contemplation is a ghostly sight; and they see into Heaven with their ghostly eye. But thou shalt wit that no man has perfect sight of Heaven, whilst they are living bodily here."[110]

No one of the great Mystics could claim, or in substance has claimed, more than this. Surely its atmosphere of truthful serenity renders it proof against Professor Leuba's charges of desire for self-expression, self-indulgence, extravagance, unwholesomeness, and the rest?

No one who reads Rolle's melodious winning prose, the earliest in time as it is to show the possibilities and resources of our English tongue, or appreciates the grasp of his good sense, and emotionalised wisdom, can doubt that had he chosen to remain at Oxford instead of wandering over the countryside hermit-wise, that

[109] *The Form of Perfect Living.*
[110] *Ibid.*

University would have added to her Scholars' Roll one more unforgettable name.

Yet, when he was nineteen or so, the call of spiritual things won his mystical soul. At once, and once for all, he turned his back on his Alma Mater, and therewith on the joys and pains of purely intellectual life. Professor Leuba maintains that early education, "home pressure" generally account for the Mystics' lives. There is not the smallest crumb of evidence among the very few established facts to suggest that anyone about Rolle in his early life, ever suspected, let alone hoped, that he would forgo learning for a hermit's life. What little record remains of the actual manner of his choice goes clean contrary to any supposition of external human pressure. The one relation who saw his flight loudly declared that he was mad. Had any secret influence at home or at Oxford, or elsewhere have been at work, is it likely that Rolle, in his account of his life, would never so much as have hinted at it? The few biographical facts, his autobiographical statements indicate the literal fact that the unreality of temporal, the reality of spiritual things, so seized on his inmost self that he made no long resistance. Once convinced, he acted: for, throughout his life he seems to have had a rather uncommon perception of the essential brevity and uncertainty of time. Thus in *Our Daily Work* he warns men:—

> "Not only this short time flies from us, but also the time of our life. . . . And one enemy, Death, follows us ever at our back, with a sharp spear to stick us through: therefore, says Seneca, 'life flies, death follows!'"

This sudden resolve to forsake Oxford, to leave his father's house, to embrace a hermit's life is, if not the first, yet the most striking instance of Rolle's impulsive temper; of that sensitive temperament which, for so many years, bitterly increased for him the kind of pain which the world's bluntness is always ready to inflict on the hyperacute; and which, as not seldom

happens, induced quite kind and excellent people to condemn him and all his ways; until, after some years of it, having learned the futility of running a human head for ever against a brick wall, he turned from the preaching which seemed so often to miss its mark,—over direct and too pungent as it was for the general taste—to write the Treatises which are for ever part of our English devotional literature. For these are books which whenever and wherever they are read cannot fail to find an entrance, which, amidst their doctrinal and devotional exhortations, set forth Rolle's mysticism, so that the unmystical Many can at least dream of what mystics have known, have actually experienced.

Of course, by "preaching" is not meant speaking officially from the Church's pulpits. Rolle was neither a secular nor a regular priest. But, early in life, anxious to win other men, he left his solitude and mingled with his fellows, in great houses, in taverns, on the highway, there teaching, exhorting, arguing with all and sundry.

It is no small proof of his essential sanity that, irked and irritated as he often was by what he felt to be unjust and cruel misrepresentation, he should have had the cool sense to realise that through some cause for which he did not blame himself, his public preaching was not only failing but driving men to do unjustly, and the disciplined will to relinquish it and turn to another way of work, whose issue, in helping not only his own but later generations, he could neither see nor feel sure of.

That his suffering under these attacks was sharp is shown by many passages in his earlier writings, specially the *Melum Contemplativorum,* where his language is not seldom violent. The memory of it did not quickly pass away. In the later treatise, *The Fire of Love,* he says:—

"Truly, before we come to that kingly hall....

it befalls us here to be reproved by flatterers and wrong-sayers, by fawners and backbiters, by praisers and blamers. . . . .

Forsooth, many that have spoken with me were like scorpions for they have fawned with their flattering hand and with their back-biting tail have smitten; from whose wicked lips and sorrowful tongue, God shall deliver my soul, setting it in the joy of rest."[111]

He cannot always suffer his foes even so calmly as this. Another passage in *The Fire of Love* shows him driven to the very edge of endurance:—

"My flesh truly fails in the griefs of this life: wherefore also ghostly virtue is made weary."

Yet always, and at the bottom, his faith and intention remained unshaken. In a short exclamation, in the tenth chapter of *The Fire of Love*, "he that is our Lord's servant trusts in our Lord," the real Rolle speaks.

Doubtless, some unrecorded, distressing, spiritual and bodily crisis came in his adolescent life, so that about the age of nineteen, realising vividly the eternal and ineluctable conflict, he renounced utterly the scholarly career which his capacity and education were making possible, left Oxford—almost certainly without a degree—and returned to his father's house in Yorkshire. Here, he made that final act of renunciation whose story is well known. He begged of his sister two of her dresses, "tunics" the *Legenda* call them; one white, the other grey. The rest is best told in the words of the *Legenda*:—

"When he had received them he straightway cut off the sleeves from the grey tunic and the

[111] *The Fire of Love*, ch. xvi. Similarly once, he wrote in the Melum:—

"Penales sunt mihi vociferantes et crucior quasi per incommodum quando clamor clangentium me tangit": (Painful to me are those who cry aloud, and I suffer inconvenience when the clamour of their shoutings reaches me.)

> buttons from the white, and as best he could he fitted the sleeves to the white tunic, so that they might in some manner be suited to his purpose. Then he took off his own clothes with which he was clad and put on his sister's white tunic next his skin, but the grey with the sleeves cut out, he put on over it, and put his arms through the holes that had been cut, and he covered his head with the rainhood aforesaid,[112] so that thus in some measure, as far as was then in his power, he might present some puzzling likeness to a hermit."

As usual, dawning, visionary spirituality collided sharply with everyday conventionality. There is no reason to suppose that Richard's clean-cut contrast, in the first chapter of *The Fire of Love,* between the "chosen" and the "rejected" had any particular personal application. But it contains the everlasting contrast between those who "see" and those who do not:—

> "Truly, the love of God and of this world may never be together in one soul; but whichever love is stronger puts out the other, that thus it may be openly known who is this world's lover and who Christ's follower."

Anyhow, his sister could not grasp his point. Seeing the use he had made of her clothes, she raised the cry, "My brother is mad." Richard, lest the rest should agree with her, violently—for his natural temper was vehement—drove her from him, and fled straight away from home.

Most certainly, Professor Leuba's conjecture fails in Rolle's case. Whatever the force compelling him was, no one could call it "home-pressure." It is equally plain that the boy, for he was little more, is innocent of another charge, which Professor Leuba makes. He certainly was not leaving uncomfortable or unpromising circumstances to embark on some primrose way of self-advertisement and personal

[112] i.e., his father's, which he borrowed.

gratification. The North Riding in the fourteenth century could hardly promise a chance of self-indulgence to a hermit. No doubt this description of the external and spiritual realities of hermit life springs from his later experience; at any rate it contains no spice of regret that once and for all, in early youth, he made that sudden withdrawal:—

> "Some truly are taught by God to desire wilderness for Christ, and to hold a single purpose; the which forthwith that they may more freely and devoutly serve God, forsaking the common clothing of the world, despise all transitory things, and cast away temporal things; and excelling in height of mind they desire only everlasting joy, and are only given to devotion and contemplation, and every effort of their life they cease not to give to the love of Christ. Of whom full many, although from men they dwell full far, yet they stumble not from heavenly desires, because their minds are full far from wicked conversation."[113]

Across such content there falls "no shadow that is made by turning": and Rolle ends it all with his merry gloss of Ps. liv. 8 (Vulg.):—

> "Fleeing by myself, I have withdrawn, and in wilderness I have dwelt."

Yet on that day when he forsook his home so suddenly, he did not travel very far, though he probably crossed rough country. It is impossible, on the evidence, to determine his stopping place. It is generally thought to have been Topcliffe, in the Vale of York, about half-way between Thirsk and Ripon. Anyhow, on the Vigil of the Assumption, he reached a Church, and, going in to say his prayers, inadvertently took the place generally left for the wife of the Squire, John de Dalton, his father's friend. Lady de Dalton, entering with her sons for Vespers, seeing him wholly absorbed in prayer, refused to let anyone disturb him. Her sons, as he rose after Vespers, saw

[113] *The Fire of Love*, Bk. I., ch. xiii.

that he was William Rolle's son, whom they had known at Oxford. There, for that day, the encounter ended. Where he spent the night is not known. When the morning came, he was again in the Church, and, according to the *Legenda*, put on a surplice and " sang Matins and the Office of the Mass with the others." After the Gospel, having received the priest's blessing, Rolle, though of course not in orders, went to the pulpit to preach. Such were the force and spirituality of his address that many in the congregation wept. The *Legenda* add :—

> " And small wonder, since he was a special instrument of the Holy Spirit, and spoke with the very breath of Him, Whose it is, as saith the Apostle to the Romans, to divide to every man severally as he will, and to make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

After Mass, the Daltons detained him, and the Squire took him to his own house. Even so, they had great difficulty in inducing him to come to the dining hall, and in keeping him there till the meal's end. Still more unwillingly did he, when challenged, admit his parentage. In the end, however, John de Dalton was wholly convinced of his sincerity about his vocation. He prevailed on him to accept a solitary dwelling on his estate, together with bare necessaries of life, and a hermit's proper dress to replace the makeshift in which he had escaped from home.

Thus Rolle definitely embarked on the course of life, which, through much pain, eventually brought him to be our sane, very human and truly English mystic.

CHAPTER II.

ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ROLLE'S DAY.

It must have become apparent now to those, who did not already know it, that the established facts about Rolle's life are few, and, speaking comparatively, unilluminating. Yet, if his surroundings can be realised, then his writings, issuing, in some part, from known conditions, may throw a little light on the man as he really was. The previous chapter is an attempt, too diffuse and straggling some may think, to convey an idea of the North and West Ridings, where he chiefly lived, and also, very briefly, of Oxford as a place of learning when he was there.

It still remains to recall the literary conditions, the work actually done, not in Latin or Norman French, but in Middle English, in the region of theology and kindred matters before Rolle's time, and in his early days. Most people have little accurate knowledge of, or, consequently, interest in, Middle English religious songs, sermons and theses: and all of us are apt, in dealing with a given person, to fail to remind ourselves of the precise stage in our literature when this or that writer lived. Too often unconsciously, we tend to speak as if everyone through the generations had had our own heritage of past prose and poetry.

Rough and tumble as life, from the description of the North Riding given in the preceding chapter, may seem to have been, scholarship and a lively love of books were not impossible in the fourteenth century. That is obvious from the *Philobiblon* of Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, whose most winning book was, as he stated—

> "finished in our Manor-house of Auckland in the year of our Lord one thousand and three hundred and forty-four,"

five years, therefore, before Rolle's death. This revealing treasure of the fourteenth century, was, of course, originally written in Latin. Editions and versions were published at various dates from 1473 till 1888, when a member of Trinity College, Oxford,—(on the site of Durham College, which de Bury knew)—Mr. Thomas, produced after collation of twenty-eight manuscripts, a stately English translation, which Dr. Gollancz had leave to and did publish later in *The King's Classics;* when he added a note saying that it is "the only trustworthy rendering of Richard de Bury's precious treatise." It is not, therefore, as a specimen of English literature in the fourteenth century, but as enshrining his thoughts about books and wisdom, and conveying to us the Bishop's love of books, as perhaps no other treatise of the century can, that this volume throws light on Rolle's time. "All things," so he declares, "are corrupted and decay in time; Saturn ceases not to devour the children that he generates; all the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books." Apostrophising Wisdom, he cries :—

> "Where dost thou chiefly lie hidden, O most elect treasure! and where shall thirsting souls discover thee?
>
> Certes, thou hast placed thy tabernacle in books, where the Most High, the Light of lights, the Book of Life, has established thee."

But even de Bury's enthusiasm could not be blind to the fact that material rewards are not given to Wisdom: this encouraging fact he magnificently justified by Aristotle's explanation of the Ancients' custom of giving prizes to athletes, and offering none to Wisdom, which he renders thus :—

> "The question he solves as follows : In gymnastic exercises the prize is better and more desirable than that for which it is bestowed; but it is

certain that nothing is better than Wisdom, wherefore no prize could be assigned to Wisdom,"

which verdict has been accepted by all the threadbare "Wise," from the day of Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford, who

"was lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty books clothed in blak and reed,
Of Aristotle and of his philosophie
Than robes riche, or fithul, or sawtrie,"

down to the present time.

This Bishop of Durham's book must not be taken as the general rule, for he carefully refers to having given "the astonishment of our contemporaries the reason why we have loved books so greatly": but it does prove the possibility and actual existence of scholarship, in its truest sense, in the kaleidoscopic fourteenth century.

Nevertheless, *Philobiblon* came too late to influence Rolle, and it is to earlier writings that we must turn to find his boyhood's atmosphere. There is no evidence to show whether or no he was acquainted with the tentative mystical gleams in Anglo-Saxon literature, with Cynewulf's work, in particular. Rolle, who "knew" by heat and song, would easily have read the meaning of the well known lines, in the added fifteenth section of *Elene;* lines not to be found in the Latin original, supposing scholars to be right in thinking Cynewulf, if he wrote it, was indebted to an earlier work:—

"I was stained with works,
With sins ensnared, with sorrows tortured,
By bitter things bound, by troubles oppressed.
Before Lore, through the form of Light (He) lent to me,
An old man, by way of help, a glorious gift,
The Mighty King meted out and poured into (my) mind,
Opening clearness, making the days more roomy;

Bone-house unbound, breast-lock opened,
Song-craft unlocked, which I joyfully broke forth in
With will about the world."

Again, there is no direct evidence whether he knew two thirteenth century treatises, *Hali Meidenhad,* written about 1200, and *The Ancren Riwle,* written some twenty-five years later. The authorship of both is unsettled: some have attributed them to one of the Poores, either Herbert, Bishop of Sarum (1194—1215), or Richard, Bishop of Sarum (1217—1229), whence he was translated by Honorius III. to Durham; where, between him and Richard de Bury, no less than seven Prince Bishops ruled that See.

In the stricter sense of the words, both these treatises are ascetical rather than mystical, specially *The Ancren Riwle.* Lately, in a book, translated into English with the title *Mystical Phenomena,* Mgr. Farges has emphasised the importance of distinguishing between, if not wholly separating, mysticism from asceticism;[1] "the *active* or ascetic way and the *passive* or mystical way." He puts the matter clearly in the Conclusion to the first section of his book,[2] with telling illustrative passages from S. Teresa's *Way of Perfection:* and he returns to it in Appendix VI.

All students now will probably agree with him, for the constant tendency, through the ages, in theology, philosophy and science, has been towards more exact and narrow limitation of scope. A good instance of the confusion of boundaries in earlier times, may be found in Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding,* which is recognised now as dealing with Psychology, rather than, as he seemed to intend, with Metaphysics. Following this ever increasing attempt to achieve precise distinctions, Mgr. Farges excludes what he calls

[1] *Mystical Phenomena,* by Mgr. Farges, translated, 1925, into English, by S. P. Jacques. Cf. pp. 4, 5, 44.
[2] pp. 227—230.

"the classical idea of the *three ways*"[3] (purgation, illumination, union) from Mysticism, and relegates it to Asceticism:—

> "Active purifications are those that are self-imposed by the soul by an effort of its own activity. By voluntary mortification of the senses, of its moods, and its own desires, it reaches—through the grace of God—a detachment more and more complete from sin and from affection for all that is evil or imperfect. To the extent that these personal efforts are successful—with the help of the sacraments and other aids to Christian life—the soul rises in the *ordinary* ways of perfection and of asceticism, the three stages of which—the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive life—we have already called to mind.
>
> "Here," (i.e., in contemplation), "in the extra-ordinary ways of perfection or mysticism, the labour of man no longer suffices. It is indispensable that God Himself should put His hand to the work: He is the principal agent in it, and the rôle of the soul is, above all, that of passive docility."[4]

What this Mysticism is, the reader may find in the second chapter of Mgr. Farges' book. The following passage which occurs towards the end of the chapter may suffice to indicate the trend of his teaching:—

> "As to the *intimate nature of the grace of God* which produces contemplation, and its supernatural psychological force, we must leave the deeper study of this to the domain of speculative theology, as did S. Teresa, who never spoke of it, in spite of her well known attachment to the teaching of S. Thomas on grace and its intrinsic efficacy. It might even be thought that she was unaware of, or wished to ignore, the fact that mystical states are attributed by all theologians to

[3] Op. cit. p. 6. [4] *Ibid.* p. 193.

> the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially to those of wisdom, knowledge and understanding. This, however, did not prevent her from clearly tracing the frontier line between passive or acquired, and active or infused contemplation, and, therefore, between the two domains of *asceticism* and *mysticism*, and from throwing incomparable light on these two modes of operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit."[5]

In very simple language, S. Teresa says the same thing :—

> "It appears to me that what we acquire for ourselves in meditations and petitions to our Lord may be termed 'sweetness in devotion.' It is natural, although ultimately aided by the grace of God. I must be understood to imply this in all I say, for we can do nothing without Him. . . . . Spiritual consolations on the contrary, arise from God, and our nature feels them and rejoices as keenly in them, and indeed far more keenly, than in the others I described."[6]

Whether or no this clear demarcation is generally accepted by writers and thinkers in future, its mere enunciation must make for lucidity of thought and understanding. From Mgr. Farges' standpoint, both *Hali Meidenhad* and *The Ancren Riwle* belong to ascetical literature, as do large tracts of Rolle's own writings. For the student of mysticism and allied subjects, the most important sections of the former, rendered, with the least possible change into English intelligible to non-students of Middle English, will be found in Appendix III. It would, of course, be idle to deny that the writer, on the whole, exalts celibacy at the expense of married life. Some passages afford justification for the charge brought in the *Cambridge History of Literature*:—"The methods of the writer are entirely wanting in that gentle grace and persuasion

[5] Op. cit., p. 98.
[6] *The Interior Castle:* Fourth Mansions, ch. i., 4.

which are found elsewhere. He sets forth his arguments in a coarse and repellent manner."[7]

Coarseness, after all, is in some degree relative to eras, of which some are plain-spoken while others are not. Anyhow, this complaint can hardly lie against the selected passages.

The Ancren Riwle is accessible to all readers in Mr. James Morton's rendering into modern English, published as Volume 20, of *The King's Classics.* It is more strictly ascetical than *Hali Meidenhad.*

Next, so far as prose is concerned, to these two books, if generally accepted dates are correct, comes Margery Kempe of Lynn. A short excerpt from her "Book" is given by Miss Gertrude Robinson, in the section entitled Examples of Mystical Literature in her *In a Mediæval Library.*[8] This would be properly classed with ascetical literature. An actual contemporary of Rolle was Robert Manning of Brunne (i.e., Bourne, in Lincolnshire), who, very early in the fourteenth century, translated, from French, *Le Manuel des Pechiez,* under the title *Handlyng Synne.* Some twenty-five years later he translated Peter de Langtoft's *Chronicle.* It appears to be probable that in the interval he rendered S. Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Supper of our Lord* and *The Hours of the Passion* into Middle English. Admittedly, he dealt easily with his originals, inserting his own work as he desired. However much that may vitiate his performance as a reliable translator, it does not affect the fact that the thoughts of the poem are at any rate harmonious with the day; they are mediæval, of Rolle's own time, for they belong to no later date than 1330. Perhaps sometimes we are apt to forget, that in those comparatively early days, people were not, as sometimes now, searching in the past for buckram or corrective, but were working with a kind of simple and unself-conscious originality and freshness that we find

[7] Vol. I., p. 229. [8] pp. 89, 90.

hard to attain. The poem, as a whole, is not mystical. Yet the stress on the necessity of Love and the prominence given to S. John are noteworthy, from the Mystic's point of view. At the outset of the description of the Last Supper it is carefully stated:—

"When the supper was made ready
Christ sat Him down and they with Him;
John the Evangelist sat Him next
Although he was of age youngest,
To Him of them all there was none
So trusty and so true as was John;
Not for fear would he flee from Him
Till He was both dead and buried."

Then, later on, when the chief points of the Great Discourse have been given, reference is again made to John's unique position:—

"Behold how homely John lieth sleeping
On Christ's breast as His darling,
This sermon at Christ's breast while sleeping did he soak
And gave it to us in a holy book."

In the description of our Lady's standing at the cross, S. John is put first, contrary to the order, and also the number, of the Gospel story:—

"By her stands John and Maries three,
Jacob, Magdalene and Cleophe."

When after her pathetic appeal to the soldiers not to break our Lord's legs, our Lady fell fainting into the arms of S. Mary Magdalene, it is S. John who defends her and our Lord:—

"Then John started up freshly anon,
And said 'wicked men, what will ye (have) done?
Have ye not slain Him with wrong and woe?
What! will ye slay His Mother also?
Go hence, for we will bury Him anon,'
All ashamed those hounds away are they gone."

On the descent from the cross, S. John once more has the privileged place:—

"When the nails were out each one,
Nicodemus privily took them to John,
. . . . . .
John bore His breast, and wept full sore,
For thereon he rested the night before."

And then, after the Sacred Body was laid in the tomb, it is S. John who leads her away, settling the question of her resting-place:—

"John said, 'we will with Magdalen alight,
For there rested our Master awhile last night;
Also my brethren will come all thither,
There will we rest and speak together.'"

This long metrical version from the Harleian MS., 1701, tallies closely with the free rendering—whether made by Rolle or by some one of his contemporaries—of S. Bonaventura's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, in the Thornton MS. in Lincoln Cathedral Library;[9] but the references to S. John's devotedness are rather more detailed and vivid than in the prose rendering. Further, in this metrical version, the Meditation for the hour of Compline contains more; e.g., the repentance of S. Peter and the other disciples in our Lady's presence, her consoling words and assurance of the Resurrection. This section ends with the lines which follow S. Peter's remembrance of their Lord's promise in the Cenacle:—

"'Ah brethren,' said Mary, 'I you pray,
That sweet sermon you will me say.'
Anon John told her, for he could best,
For sleeping, he soaked it (in) at Christ's breast.
Then they dwelt in their meditation
Till time was come for the Resurrection";

lines which close the account of the actual Passion with a touch of the mystical temper.

In any case, Robert of Brunne's work is not likely to have influenced Rolle much, if at all. It was a con-

[9] A rendering of this is included at the end of the *Minor Works of Richard Rolle*, published by John M. Watkins, 1923.

temporary work, no part of his early environment. This is truer still of dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwyt,* a translation of a French book, known under various titles, which a Dominican composed, in 1279, for Philip II. of France, and which was turned into English about 1340. Apparently Père Lorens put it together from several previous works. Dan Michel of Northgate, by his casual remark that it was "written in English of his own hand" might allow a reader to infer that it was his original composition, not a translation. It dealt mainly with such familiar matters as the Commandments, Creeds and Paternoster, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Cardinal Virtues, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost: and so it falls into the class of ascetical rather than mystical books.

The verse of the thirteenth century, which, comparatively speaking, may be called abundant, may throw a few further gleams of light on Rolle's literary heritage, though again no evidence can be brought of his certain acquaintance with it. Yet, the influence of song permeates the general atmosphere more easily and quickly than any prose, specially in primitive times before books were plentiful, and reading a commonplace accomplishment. Song can be carried in the memory and recited, as prose cannot be. These poems, composed immediately before Rolle's day, exist in considerable number in the Cotton and Jesus College MSS., which belong to the first half of the thirteenth century; the latter MS. being the later of the two. Among these poems is one of 700 lines on the Passion. It opens on an unwonted note:—

> "Hear now one little tale, that I to you will tell
> As we find it written (out) in the Gospel.
> It is not of Charlemagne nor of the Twelve Peers,
> But of Christ's Passion that He tholed here."

It differs from S. Bonaventura's entirely. It begins with our Lord's birth, relates salient incidents in the years of His ministry beginning with the Temptation, goes on briefly to His Teaching and some miracles,

and then abruptly passes to Palm Sunday and Holy Week. In the recital of the Passion, our Lady is not mentioned, though the closing lines are a petition to her to carry our prayers to "her sweet Son." The Gospel story of the crucifixion is very much shortened. Unlike S. Bonaventura, the author of this poem, following S. Mark's specific statement, says that our Lord appeared first to S. Mary Magdalene. After the narrative of the Ascension, the poem goes on to the persecutions under Nero and Dacian. Here and there the writer gives some rein to his imagination, as in the scene of the Capture :—

"Peter saw the Jews our Lord fast bind
Anon he drew him aback and went behind.
Lest he should be known, full was he of dread,
None the less he would know whither He was led.

. . . . . .

Of all His disciples there followed Him not one,
Only S. Peter and one young man.
John had on a mantle of cendal[10] himself about
He went in with Jesus Christ, and Peter stood thereout.

. . . . . .

Some of them there knew S. John,
And took him by the mantle that he had on.
He left his mantle in the Jews' hand,
And himself, all naked, at the door outwent.
Ere he could escape it seemed to him full long,
For the fear of death is very strong."

In another MS. there is a short poem called *A Song on the Passion,* of which an attempted rendering is given in Appendix II., partly for its intrinsic beauty, and partly for its notably English love of nature and of returning summer, a taste which is to be found in the "secular" poems of the time, e.g., in the well known *Cuckoo-Song,* whose date is about 1240.

To a student of Mysticism, the Poem on the

[10] A rich stuff, generally of silk : here, probably, "fine linen."

XI. Pains of Hell is interesting. It is to be found in the Jesus College MS. and there are variants of it in the Douce and Vernon MSS. The last two are in Middle English, the first is a mixture of that with French. The Vernon MS. explicitly states that it is "the Vision of S. Paul when he was rapt into Paradise," which seems at first sight a confusion; which disappears if we recollect that it has not seldom been supposed that the blessed at any rate could have knowledge of the condition of the rest. The Jesus College MS. closes with the words *Expliciunt. XI. pene. Inferni. quas videt Beatus Paulus.*

Probably, all three are far too detailedly vivid in their description for an era which neglects, if it does not scoff at, the gravity of sin and the inevitability of consequences. The horror even of Rolle's *Three Arrows of Doomsday* is exceeded. The most dreadful of the three is the Jesus College MS., which from the admixture of French, would seem to have borrowed some flavour of French thirteenth century feeling. Its vivid imagery is terrible like the sculpture on the west front of the Cathedral of S. Etienne at Bourges, where it depicts the fate of the lost. The poem increases the horror by declaring that no saint in heaven could dare to intercede for them, and that their own prayers for help are futile:—

> "For high they weep for evermore,
> For their help (it is) not worth a sloe."

On the other hand, a gentler spirit pervades the other two MSS. Both, in one phrase or another, record that:—

> "Paul's heart was so sore
> That for sorrow he wept there."

And, which is more remarkable still, at the close of both poems, intercession is made for the doomed. According to the Douce MS. it is pleaded by S. Paul and all the angels in heaven. In the Vernon MS. S. Michael, who in both poems is S. Paul's guide, after

the manner of Virgil and Dante,[11] is added to those who intercede.

" Then kneeled Paul and Michael,
And a million angels well,
Before the Son of God to pray:
They must have rest on Sunday.

. . . . . .

Then said our Lord to them in spell[12]
' For Paul and also Michael,
And My other angels on high,
That are in heaven so good and true,
And also of My great goodness,
To ease them of their distress
This rest I give to you full soon
From the Saturday at None[13]
Till the second hour be come
On the Monday: to all and some.'
Anon the souls had their rest,
He gave it to them Who could best.
The souls they cried, every one,
' Blessed be Thou, Lord, Son of Man,
Lord and God of David, kind,
By Thee, we have this rest of mind.' "

The theology may be confused, it may not be wholly characteristic of the general tenour of mediæval doctrine. Certainly it is not found in Rolle's writings, such as the *Three Arrows*, and *The Pricke of Conscience* if that be his.

Another poem in the Jesus College MS. deals, in 354 lines, dispersed in six-line stanzas, with the same theme. Its title is *Sinners Beware*. Though it omits the terrifying details, its temper is pitiless. It asserts that " the Good, the Mild and the Clean," shall not only have no compassion on the doomed, but shall take no notice of them whatever.

[11] The account of the different fates of the sinners in the " horrible flood " reminds the reader of not a few passages in the *Inferno*.

[12] Discourse.

[13] The ninth hour, 3 p.m.

The thirteenth century offers two lyrics in a wholly different and more mystical vein; taking the word in its strictest sense, the earliest of these—Thomas de Hales' *Luve ron,* is perhaps the most mystical composition in Middle English before Rolle. Thomas was a Friar Minor, who wrote this song at the request of a maiden dedicated to God. Into it steals an echo of that cry for an unreturning past, which uttered by more than one writer from very far-off days, onwards, was immortalised by Villon in 1461 in his *Ballade des Dames du temps jadis:—*

> " La royne Blanche comme ung lys,
> Qui chantoit à voix de sereine,
> Berthe au grand pied, Beatrix, Allys,
> Haremburges qui tint le Mayne,
> Et Jehanne, la bonne Lorraine,
> Qu'Anglois bruslèrent à Rouen;
> Où sont-ilz, Vierge souveraine? . . .
> Mais où sont les neiges d'antan! "

The *Luve ron* is more " literary " than the Passion poems. At the same time its theme if not more devotional is more definitely mystical, for its aim is nothing less than total surrender to the heavenly Lover; its spirit, if it sound less ardent, is that of the *Imitation—da totum pro toto;*[14] its goal is union with the most Beloved and the most Fair. It is possible that Thomas de Hales was partly influenced by a passage in Hugh of S. Victor's *De Arrha Animae,* which belongs to the early half of the twelfth century: though Hugh insists on the soul's attractiveness, which Thomas stresses rather differently. In the Dialogue between Hugh[15] and his soul, the latter urges:—

> " You must then either approve my love of the Visible, or if thou dost take that away, thou must

[14] " Give all for All."

[15] According to the "editio princeps," the Dialogue is between Hugh and his soul. Other MSS. and Migne substitute Homo for Hugo.

show me something else which I may love more healthily and more agreeably."

In the course of a lengthy answer, Hugh says :—

"Thou hast a Lover, though thou knowest it not. He is the Fairest of all, but thou hast not seen His Face. He has seen thee, otherwise He would not love thee. But, so far, He has not desired to show Himself to thee : but He has sent thee presents, He offers thee the Pledge of His Betrothal, a surety of love, a mark of His dilection.

Couldest thou but know Him and behold His features, thou wouldest not doubt thine own beauty. Thou wouldest know that a Lover so fair, so accomplished, so gracious, a Lover without peer, would not be enamoured of thine appearance, if some charm, remarkably singular and admirable, had not attracted Him."

No rendering into modern English, or into any other form of speech but its own, can do anything but ruin Thomas de Hales' winsome *Luve ron.* Yet it fills so large a place in the scanty Mystical literature of its time, that an attempt at a rendering will be found in Appendix II., for the help of those who do not read Middle English.

About thirty years later, an entire poem on this regret for past days was written under the title *Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerint?* Though by a misuse of language, this can be classed with religious poems, the writer gives the whole thing a twist. Instead of Villon's longing adoration of past beauty, grace, or greatness, instead of Thomas de Hales' mystical love, seeking for the true Beloved, for the irrevocably Fair, we find the furious hatred, then growing up in England, against the rich, the well-fed, the luxurious. The following savage lines from it, exhibit the writer's graceless joy over what he believes to be the certain fate of those who move him to intense ire ;—

"Where be they who before us were?—

. . . . . .

The rich ladies in their bower.

. . . . . .

They ate and drank and made them glad;
Their life was all with games led:
Before them, men kneeled down,
Themselves they bore most exceedingly high,
And, in the twinkling of an eye
Their souls were utterly lost.
Where is that laughing and that song?
That trailing about and proud carriage,
The hawks and also the hounds?
All that joy is gone away.

. . . . . .

Their paradise they enjoyed here,
And now together in hell they lie,
The fire it burneth ever,

. . . . . .

Thence, they come again never."

One poem of enormous length—it contains 24,970 lines—appeared during Rolle's life-time, the North-umbrian *Cursor Mundi*. The Author, not yet identified, starts with the assertion that men "covet to hear rimes and to read romances," of Alexander, Julius Cæsar, of Greece and Troy, of Brutus, Arthur, Gawain, Charlemagne, Roland, Tristram and sweet Ysoude, of Jonech, Amadas, and other princes, prelates and kings. But, for his part, his choice lies elsewhere, namely, with her

"Who on earth saves me from sin,
And helps me heaven to win."

So his long song is, ostensibly, in praise of the Queen of Heaven. Following Bede's division of the world's stages of history into Seven Ages, he produced out of what may be called immense reading, consider-ing his era, a treasure house of facts and legends of many sorts and kinds.

The first four Ages treat of events between the Creation and King Zedekiah's Exile in Babylon. The fifth deals with the family of the Blessed Virgin, of the Annunciation, of the Birth and Childhood of our Lord. The sixth records part of His Ministry, and some events, to the Ascension, passing then to the founding of the Catholic Church, our Lady's Assumption, and the Finding of the Cross, and finally to the early Christian persecutions. The seventh deals with the Day of Doom.

This poem, whether Rolle were acquainted with it or not, has no connection with Mysticism; but it has a touch of Symbolism, in the fifth Age, where an account is interpolated of a "fair castle"; it is a good example of mediæval allegorical exposition. The building is described as polished, turreted, founded on a rock, enclosed by four walls, guarded by a moat, containing a throne fairer than any earthly King ever occupied. No war ever enters it; it is a peaceful refuge for all needing succour. As the account proceeds, it becomes clear that the Castle symbolises our Lady: every part,—its polished surface, its turrets, its brilliant, varied colours,—corresponds to some part of her gifts and powers, or to her relations with sinful men.

A special interest attaches to the Seventh Age, because a description is given of the Fifteen Tokens of Doom, before the Last Day. Whether the old and widely accepted view that Rolle wrote *The Pricke of Conscience* (1340) be right, or whether Miss Frances Comper be correct in thinking that Miss Allen has "proved that whatever else he may have written, this most certainly he did not write,"[16] nothing can alter the fact that the Doom Window in the northern aisle of All Saints' Church (North Street) at York, has long been known as the Rolle Window; simply because its fifteenth century glass represents, most strangely and

[16] *The Fire of Love*, by Frances Comper, rendered into English, p. xxviii.

unforgettably, the account given in Book V. of *The Pricke of Conscience,* of these fifteen Tokens of Doom, which form part of mediæval eschatology.

As to Rolle's authorship, it is interesting to remember that in the eighteenth century, Thomas Warton, in his *History of English Poetry,* assumed that Rolle was the writer of *The Pricke of Conscience*:—

> "Richard Hampole, an eremite of the Order of S. Augustine. He was a doctor of divinity, and lived a solitary life near the nuns of Hampole, four miles from Doncaster in Yorkshire. The neighbourhood of this female society could not withdraw our recluse from his devotions and his studies. . . His principal pieces of English rhyme are a paraphrase of part of the book of Job, of the Lord's Prayer, of the Seven Penitential Psalms and *The Pricke of Conscience.* But our hermit's poetry which indeed from these titles promises but little entertainment, has no tincture of sentiment, imagination or elegance. The following verses are extracted from *The Pricke of Conscience,* one of the most common manuscripts in our libraries, and I prophesy that I am its last transcriber."

This, perhaps the strangest verdict on Rolle ever written, is, besides, an amalgam of fact and fiction. Rolle, it is agreed, was a hermit, and belonged to no Order. He was not a Doctor of Divinity; in all probability he left Oxford before he could take his Bachelor's degree. Warton, most likely had made no more exact study of the "Rolle canon" than he had of the inwardness of the religious life. As to the other writings which he ascribes to him, they are generally accepted by scholars; he was evidently taking the current belief that Rolle also wrote *The Pricke of Conscience.* His *History of Literature* was a notable venture; it contains much which is still of value: it seems therefore the more odd that a man who showed himself often so acute a critic, and whose attraction to "Romance" was as rare and obvious as Thomas

Gray's, should have missed some elements, "romantic" enough, in this "one of the most common MSS. in our libraries."

The window at All Saints', York, has three lights, each containing five sections, which portray,—though not in quite accurate order—the fifteen dooms as Rolle gives them. At the base of each light is a panel, containing three kneeling figures, donors possibly. In the upper tracery, two quatrefoils filled with glass show, respectively, S. Peter welcoming the blessed, and a devil gloating over the damned. Careful restoration has replaced some glass which had disappeared. Perhaps the most telling "doom" as portrayed, is the fourth, where the "growling" of the monstrous fish can almost be heard; and the eleventh, when "men come out of their holes and wend about, as if they were mad," which indeed they look to be.

The two accounts do not agree. That in the *Cursor Mundi* is far more drawn out than Rolle's. A modern rendering of both will be found in Appendix II. It is true that they have no direct mystical significance. But these writings, whether in verse or prose, about the Four Last Things, whether these of the Fifteen Dooms, Rolle's *Three Arrows of Doomsday,* or *The XI. Pains of Hell,* are, after all, the background of thirteenth and fourteenth century thought and feeling. They have ascetical force. Moreover, against them, the grace of the mystic, the aspiration of the saint, the search of the lover for the beloved shine out with a radiance all the more consoling, just because they are so spontaneous, so far removed from all estimates of loss and violence, of pain and penalty. Lastly, they remind us, too, here and there at least, of mediæval humour, so real, so pervasive,—in sculpture, carving, painted glass and literature; that genuine humour, which even amidst the horror of the eleventh day, when the devils, having escaped from their prison-house, come to see what is happening upon the earth, can suddenly break in to tell how the winds and the

rainbow mixed themselves together to drive away the intruders, and finally to " dump the devils down " into hell again.

This literature, with its crudeness, deserves study for yet another reason; because with a few exceptions—like *Hali Meidenhad* and the *Luve ron*,—it serves to enhance Rolle's originality and literary genius. For practical purposes his writings are the first great example of English prose, distinguished from most of what preceded it by the melody of his style, his simple directness, the intensity of his vision, his astonishing fervour, his lucidity, his penetration and sometimes his sly wit.

CHAPTER III.

ROLLE AND THE GREAT WESTERN MYSTICS.

THE previous chapter will have made it evident that there was little indigenous Mysticism in England which had shown itself in writings accessible to and likely to influence Rolle.

But the scene changes when inquiry is made as to his possible "sources" in the whole great life of the Church.

Abbot Butler, in his *Western Mysticism,* has, as a result of years of patient work, differentiated the attitude of three great Western Mystics,—S. Augustine, S. Gregory the Great, and S. Bernard of Clairvaux—towards Contemplation. The names of these three great Doctors of the Church occur not seldom in Rolle's Writings, and whether he learned little or much of Contemplation from books, or whether he was only prepared by them for actual experience which came later, he certainly was not unacquainted with them. To these three, S. Bonaventura must be added; probably, too, Hugh and Richard of S. Victor. The problem—how did he obtain their writings?—is difficult to solve. At Oxford, no doubt, he could have had access to them, but his career there was cut short by his own decision; and when he left his father's house, he began a wandering, shifting life from cell to cell, in Yorkshire, which must have made consecutive reading difficult. Further, had his own way of life been more suitable to a scholar's needs, the apparatus of learning in the North was meagre. As all readers of King Alfred's translation of S. Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* know, the Danes wrecked learning down to the Humber. York was, of course, not beyond Rolle's reach. But the treasures collected by Archbishop Ecbert, the founder of York's Library, and by

him handed on to Alcuin, must have suffered severely from the Danes. Reference was made before (p. 63) to Alcuin's list of the Fathers and Doctors in the Library, among whom were S. Augustine and S. Gregory. Anything which survived the Danish depredations, and all that was collected again up to the third quarter of the eleventh century, was destroyed before Rolle lived. York refused at first to submit to William of Normandy, and in 1068 he took and plundered the City. The castle which he built at the junction of the Ouse and the Foss, was manned, naturally, by Normans. When, in 1069, the city was threatened again by a Danish fleet, the various Norman garrisons fired the adjacent houses, and the flames spread until eventually the Minster was practically destroyed, along with the main part of the City.

When William's Chaplain, who was made Archbishop, Thomas of Bayeux, arrived in his Cathedral City, nothing remained of his Minster and its famous Library but ruins. That great collection, from which Alcuin, when he passed into Charlemagne's service, had begged a temporary loan, for the use of students in Tours, had gone for ever. It was never really replaced. At the Reformation, a small number of volumes, which had been collected, were available, but the Library building had not been rebuilt; so the books were housed in what is now the Archbishop's Registry. Obviously, York, even if he could pay it a visit, would have been of no use to Rolle. There is no evidence that the Archbishop then was a scholar. He was William de Melton. He once led an army unsuccessfully against the Scots. More archiepiscopally, he finished the Minster's Nave, and glazed the great West Window—the last of them all to be filled—at a cost of 100 marks.

As York had had scholars aforetime, so Ripon could boast of having had one, Wilfrid, who gave a copy of the Gospels to the Minster Library; and, according to Canon Peter of Blois, some other books too. Peter,

writing in the twelfth century, implies that something like a Library existed in his time. When it was destroyed is not known, but it must have been, for very few of the 5,000 books,—now in the Lady-Loft which is used as a Library—go back behind the Reformation. Therefore, it is possible that in Rolle's time, there may have been some sort of a Library at Ripon, because there is plenty of time for its supposed destruction between his death and the Reformation; and the destruction of books and also of music during the activities of Edward's ministers was as widespread as it was reckless. Then there were the monastic houses; Rievaulx for example, built in that lovely oasis of the Rye Valley, that the monks, in so withdrawn a spot, might have peace and seclusion in the midst of a disturbed world. It is, of course, not beyond possibility, that Rolle, wandering over the country between Pickering Forest, Ainderby and Hampole, may sometimes have had intercourse with the monks there, at Fountains and at Byland. But their Libraries may have been exiguous; and, after all, a hermit is a hermit, not a member of an Order. Yet, some access to books, he must have had, otherwise his frequent quotations cannot be accounted for. For instance, in *The Form of Perfect Living* and in *Our Daily Work*, two treatises most characteristic of his methods, he not only makes references to the Fathers of the Desert, but he quotes directly from the three great Latin Doctors, selected by Abbot Butler as typical of Western monasticism; seven times from S. Augustine, six from S. Bernard, twelve from S. Gregory. He quotes further three times from S. Jerome, twice from S. Isidore, and once each from SS. Ambrose and Anselm. In a Breviary he would find extracts from some of the Fathers, but this source would not cover his knowledge of them.

It may be recalled here that the Friars Minor, adopting an adapted form of the Roman *Breviarum Curiæ* —their conspicuous deviation being the selection of the

"Gallican Psalter," S. Jerome's version—had succeeded in spreading the use and knowledge of the Breviary throughout the Catholic world; so that by the end of the thirteenth century it was in what may be called common use. Presumably at Oxford, Rolle, if he were not before, would have grown familiar, with it. If he possessed a copy, he may at least have taken that in his hurried escape from his home; but the *Legenda* give no information on such points. Anyhow, in some of the "big houses" he was in, from time to time, as a visitor, there must have been a chapel, so that he could obtain the use of a Breviary. Moreover, he could have hardly performed his daily devotions without it.

For all the evidence there is to the contrary, some of the long hours of his early wandering years may have been given to the study of books. If not, how can his sudden capacity, so marked and so abundant, for writing be accounted for? When he left home, hardly knowing his own intention, he started without guidance to demonstrate how the life of a mystic could be lived, in that chaotic age, in one of the most disturbed parts of England, whose social side has been shown in part at least from contemporary documents. It was only too evident, after his premature renunciation of Oxford, that he could not, in his early years, lay any claim to serious scholarship. His contemporaries, when angry with him, were not slow in twitting him with the fact, as his early Latin work, *Melum Contemplativorum ardentium in amore Dei*, shows: "Who taught him, from what doctor did he hear it?" they asked contemptuously. The only possible reply would seem to be, that in all eras, some men have contrived to teach themselves.

When he entered the cell which John de Dalton had provided for him, Rolle had put his foot on the first rung of a high, and, some might think, a shaky ladder. All the real work remained to be done. Young and inexperienced as he was, aged only about twenty, the

goal to be reached must, as he meditated in that flat reaction which always follows any daring resolve translated into fact,—irrevocable fact,—have seemed illimitably far off.

In that lone, alarming hour, however uncertain and drear he found it, he still can have had no notion of the fulness of the sacrifice involved; still less of its momentous meaning to himself first, and then to others. To others because, however much he has been neglected, he was the first of our great English mystics, and of them all surely the most daringly original. When this boy sat down alone, unguided by man, to re-orientate himself, he was really setting out on a course which, however broken and confused it may have seemed to him then, was not only to settle his own destiny, leave an indelible mark on some of his contemporaries, but centuries later, was destined to be rediscovered by other pilgrim souls, before whom it set an unforgettable example.

Dr. Horstman, to his edition of Rolle's Writings, prefixed a comprehensive and useful Introduction. As the book has been long out of print, it may be permissible to quote here the passage in which he summarised the typical English attitude to philosophy and theology :—

> " Philosophy, in the German or Greek sense, has never existed in England : the English mind is naturally disposed to reduce the claims of philosophy, and in the same measure to enlarge the scope of theology; it wants a revealed truth, a given authority, a personal God, a commandment, to be religiously at rest; and all theories that tend to mix up things human and divine, and to bridge over the gulf between the two have been unpopular. The English Mystics carefully kept within the pale of the Christian Faith, and their theory is simply that of contemplation within the lines marked out by the Victorines; the only gain they brought lies in a more minute examination of

> the phases and sensations in the mystic process... The chief conquests of the English Mystics lay on the side of practical, moral and popular theology, and gradually they—even more than Bonaventura —absorbed the whole sphere of religion. They taught the way Godward, the way of perfection, the ruling of life; and at the same time they undertook the edification and instruction of the people."

In this lucid passage, which English people may find more complimentary than perhaps it was intended to be, we have not only a key to Rolle's life and teaching, but a singularly effective guide to the developing processes of the Ecclesia Anglicana, with its baffling weakness in tenacious strength, and further still, to the main trend of English religious life and speculation.

However true the substance of this criticism may be of the English temper in general, and of Rolle's in particular, nothing of the sort can have been in the boy's mind, as he sat down in that cell, presumably somewhere near Topcliffe, to review the past and to order the present. He had renounced the comforts and consolations of his father's house: he had cut short the pleasant life in fourteenth century Oxford. Alone, dependent on a friend's charity, for "a place for his solitary abode," together with the meagre food and clothing without which existence was impossible, he must have seen the future as a doubtful, raw-edged, painful prospect.

Rolle clearly hints, and sometimes says outright, that temptations of various sorts played their part in driving him from the ordinary life of men and women in the world. Moreover, in the Preface to the *Incendium Amoris,* he confesses that leaving the world, as he did, proved anything but instantly efficacious:

> "Filth of the flesh creeps up tempting restful minds; bodily need also and the frail affections of man."

As he meditated in those first early days of entire separation from the past, in that emptiness which no new joys had yet come to fill, can any experienced person fail to realise how many pictures of Oxford life—good or not—how many recollections of cheery well-being and warmth, of dear old family fun, how many longings for natural affection, and, in particular, surely what unsatisfied desire to explain to his sister—their affection is on record—that that vehement exit did not mean lack of love or ill-temper, how much of all that, and more must have crowded into his tired head and starved heart?

Later on, he was to learn the compensations of entire self-surrender, of unlimited self-stripping; but not yet. Some day, he would be able to say with all his heart:—

> "Thou ravishest Thy lovers from all earthly things, above all desire of earthly things."

Later on, he would declare with all the authority of experience that:—

> "The soul of man feels nothing of the burning of endless love, the which has not perfectly forsaken all worldly vanity, studying busily to be given to heavenly things, and to desire God's love without ceasing, and mannerly to love all creatures to be loved."

But this last high estate, when self-interest is extinguished, or rather exchanged for the whole-hearted loving of God, and this in such wise that "love of all creatures to be loved" falls into its due and orderly place, was far, very far, on ahead along that difficult road, whose beginning even, and direction Rolle still had to discover. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that he so much as caught a glimpse of the reality in those first early days when, after his wild run from the world, he must have felt like nothing but a panting refugee from some half-visualised but overwhelming peril.

The first stage in the Mystic's life, as the most casual student knows, is Purgation. It seems unlikely, in spite of his hints in the *Melum* and the *Incendium Amoris* about temptations of the flesh, and his exhortations in the former, to young men and women to forsake everything for "eternal love," that his own main difficulty lay there. His recurrent and most dangerous sins were rather of the intellect and heart. The Saints have never been insensibly immaculate; they are sinners, often great sinners, who have conquered in the fight.

For Rolle there was another trap, for he seems to have been naturally of that single-minded, ardent temperament which is so clearheadedly and insistently set on its own sharply-seen aim, that it either does not know or forgets that its purpose is neither obvious to nor necessarily convincing to other people. Further, he was by constitution a hot-tempered, vehement, impatient man. In the difficulties accumulating out of such a combination of qualities, there was ample scope for all the processes of a long purgation.

While he was in the Daltons' cell, he seems to have enjoyed some repose, he was left to himself, so far as his fellow-creatures were concerned. But, as his writings show, that self of his was no very easy companion. The faults which Professor Leuba so generously lavishes on the Mystics—vanity, ambition, self-indulgence and the rest—were not Rolle's. But his temperament, summing it up altogether, was of that comfortless kind which misleads outsiders to the point sometimes of giving them bitter offence, and is all the while so thin-skinned and sensitive that misunderstanding and unjust condemnation eat in like acid and sear like flame.

There are no ascertained dates, precisely assignable, to his life's events. Without doubt he was for a time solitary, and, to all natures, solitude is a searching test. In the *Incendium Amoris* he gives a clue to the possible duration of his stay in his first cell, where he speaks of the lapse of

" four years and about three months " before " the heavenly door was opened."

The words may pass easily enough through the reader's attention; but to this solitary man, they must have seemed an almost unending time, filled with loneliness and longings: for if he had, as we know he had, his difficulties with strangers casually met, and even more with uncongenial neighbours, he had something like genius for friendship. Never did he admit that human friendships, as such, could displease God; he insisted that rather they were His gift. As for those whom he could not win, *non feci sicut ipsi fecerunt,*—(I did not do as they did),—is his simple explanation, offered in the *Melum,* which records so faithfully the pain of those early years, when he was exposed to bitter fault-finding and sometimes expulsion. From this autobiographical writing, we learn that he left the comparative comfort, and certainly the protection of the Daltons' cell, in anything but a happy mood:—

> "As Cain was made a vagrant and fugitive upon earth for the crime of fratricide, so am I in this exile of an uncertain dwelling; I roam from place to place."[1]

Lady Dalton, by this time, was dead. Whether on account of that or from some other cause, Rolle had to leave the place where he caught the first gleam,—" the heavenly door was opened,"—in one of those illuminating moments which come to the Mystics as they climb and struggle along the Purgative Way.

For a while, he wandered; and this way of life brought him to a new phase and method which further exacerbated the uncomprehending. As he, in his own words, " went from place to place," he took the chance presented to publish his doctrines, and proclaim his

[1] Quemadmodum Cayn vagus et profugus super terram factus fuit pro facinore fratricidii, ita et ego in hoc exilio incertae sedis fio; de loco ad locum transeo.

views. In particular, he espoused the cause of the poor, the ill-used, the unfortunate. Irritated by the rich of the kind who live selfish, uncaring lives, he assured the ill-off and distressed of their eventual and inevitable reward :—

> "Rejoice ye poor in your poverty; patience tries charity; trial works hope; and hope does not confound; exult, ye needy ones; rejoice, ye beggars; look up ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven: ye endure a little and for a short time; ye shall glory much and for ever."[2]

All of it true and consonant with the Gospels' promises: and yet perhaps,—since "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"—not, in Rolle's half "mortified" state, entirely innocent of some trace of a safety-valve for his wrath against those who did not hesitate to fling upon him epithet after epithet,—foolish, demented, a hypocrite, a conceited scamp.

Yet, almost immediately after that comparison of himself to Cain, he would catch himself up and admit that the most untoward things have their uses :—

> "It is not to be judged a useless thing if in my youth I saw many places."[3]

However, that quiet acceptance of the Purgative Way could not remove the root cause of his trouble,—"I did not do what they did."

The uneasy dislike, felt by the average many for the singularity of the few, is one of the unexplored curiosities of human psychology. Richard Rolle, livelily aware as he was of the fact, could not alter

[2] Gaudete pauperes in paupertatem vestra: patientiam probat caritas, probatio spem operatur, spes autem non confundit; exultamini inopes, gaudete mendici, pauperes suspicite, quia vestra est regnum Dei; modicum et breviter patimini, multum et aeternaliter gloriabimini.

[3] "Non inutile arbitrandum est si in juventute mea plura loca viderim."

it:—"I could not get on with men," he wrote in the *Melum.* Nor, whether they realised it or not, could they with him, because beneath the temperamental difficulties and psychological failures lay a substantial difference of aim and means. Incapable of grasping his standpoint or even his words, they seem to have translated them all into the most damaging possibilities, and then to have spread their cruel tales with all that reckless zeal which can spring from blunt perception blent with unintelligent fear.

The result was that he was driven out from all the cells, given to him, one after another, by this friend or that. Far worse, his inner peace of mind and his capacity for contemplation, were, for the time being, disastrously impaired. After all, Contemplation requires at least a measure of stationary security and rest. Ingenuous and simple, as the good sometimes are, he misled the crowd further by his particular method of trying to spread religion and to gain fresh followers for his Lord. A method it was of familiar chatting with all sorts of people, of every class. He entered the Manor House and addressed himself to its master as readily, but not more so, than he sat down in a tavern to win the good folk there, engaged with their ale and their jests. As "the world" will never grasp the unconventionality of the Saints, his plan was nicely appropriate, if he could have realised it, for giving umbrage, and, therefore, fresh material for slander, to those tiresome Pharisees who will neither dance to piping nor weep at dirges. Rolle's own explanation, so neat in its nutshell, is the only one which fits the facts, *non feci sicut ipsi fecerunt.* The whole tragedy of human misprision was there.

Only the quick of temper and thin of skin can completely grasp the misery into which so simply well-intentioned a soul as Rolle's can be plunged, when it reflects on the disturbance of inner peace involved in such wholly gratuitous broils. The bitterest passages about his opponents and detractors occur in his early

writings, and specially in the *Melum,* which he may have begun about 1326. For so long, as it must have seemed to him, people had misrepresented him and driven him from places of refuge with those well enough off to supply his slender needs, thus depriving him of shaded repose in summer, of shelter in the rigour of a Yorkshire winter, that, at last, goaded by injustice and suffering, his resolution and his right-mindedness temporarily failed under the strain, and he cried defiantly to one unidentified tormentor—*Quid arguis, O impie, quem approbat Auctor? non poteris tu, perfide, destruere in dolo quem Deus dedicavit.*[4] Only too obviously, he had made small progress in mortification.

Too much however may be made of the outbursts in this long, autobiographical work: and far too much can be made of his hot temper. Neither Rolle in his temperament, nor his enemies in their skilful fitting of ways and means, were singular. A great Spanish Saint, Luis de Leon, two centuries later, encountered similar provocation with results even more hampering to himself. Mr. Bell in his life of the Saint, wrote:—

> "His consciousness of being in the right led him into bad policy. He kept on informing the Inquisitors how they ought to act, and although they were not unaccustomed to independence .... they could not help resenting these suggestions. It is impossible to doubt that Luis de Leon's enemies at Salamanca had counted on all this; who better than they knew how nervous he was and how fiercely he would combat what he deemed tyranny or injustice?"[5]

Though, since heresy hunts were fewer in the fourteenth than in the sixteenth century, Richard and

[4] "O impious man! why dost thou denounce him, whom the Creator approves? perfidious one, thou canst not craftily destroy him whom God consecrated."

[5] *Life of Luis de Leon,* by Aubrey Bell, p. 151.

Luis differed in the extent of their relative entanglement in theological perils, they were not unlike in temperament: and people who draw advantage from exploiting their neighbours' temperamental weaknesses are forthcoming in all times and places. It may be suggested, in this connection, that the relation between insensibility and mediocrity of intelligence is another region of Psychology, up to the present, insufficiently explored.

Another consideration more closely pertinent to the spiritual side of all this trouble, is this,—Purgation cannot occur in a vacuum. There must be at least a sin, and that a grave and vexatious one, to be overcome. In the *Legenda,* carefully compiled as we know for official use in connection with his proposed canonisation, reference, as follows, is made to his purgative life:—

> "Ecce vero, ex hiis verbis, qualiter proficiat in adepcione suavissimi amoris dei; quia autem multa preparatoria ad accensionem hujusmodi amoris, ut puta ea quae diminuunt et tollunt amoris contrarios, ideo, saucius iste, carnis attrivit lascivi vias, in quarum amorem multi impetu bestiali et vesano feruntur, mundum etiam sprevit cum suis divitiis, solum contentus arcis (? arctis) vite necessariis, ut liberius vacare posset amoris veri deliciis.
>
> Hiis igitur ex causis, maceravit carnem suam multis jejuniis, crebis vigiliis, insistendo singultibus atque suspiriis, deserens omnem strati molliciem, scamnum durum habens pro lecto, brevem casellam pro domo, mentem semper figens in celo, cupiens dissolvi et esse cum Christo dilecto suo dulcissimo."[6]

[6] *Officium de Sancto Ricardo de Hampole, et Legenda de Vita Eius.* Lec. V.:—
Behold then, by these words how proficient he was in attaining the sweetest love of God: but because there are many preparatory steps to the kindling of this kind of love,—as e.g.,

The Saints, as we are so often told and as we so constantly forget, were not and are not indigenously meek and faultless: no saint ever developed from lath and plaster. They are, as we perfectly well know, the strong men and women; strong in passion at first if in nothing else, who learn, at long last, and through bitter pain, how to direct and govern their strength. As Rolle wrote, in *The Mending of Life*:—

> "Not with going of feet are we turned to God, but with change of our desires and manners."

It can hardly be doubted that his cleansing was brought about by the steady and at last victorious chastening of a temper, by nature more than ordinarily tempestuous, further provoked by many trials, some inevitable, others gratuitous.

Besides all this, it may be remembered that like the Gospels, sanctity has its paradoxes. Our Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." But He also said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it (or snatch it) by force." These are not contrary propositions, but a paradox, of the kind which Rolle came near to personifying in his fiery violence and his meek self-stripping.

And so, scorned by those whom he would so willingly have helped, poor to the point of going sometimes in rags,[7] sometimes with no food but water, exposed to summer's heat and winter's cold, longing for a

those which lessen and remove contrary affections,—therefore the Saint wore down the lascivious ways of the flesh, to the love of which many are carried by a bestial and furious impulse. The world also, with its riches, he despised, being content with the straitest necessaries of life, that he might more freely enjoy the delights of true love. For these reasons, therefore, he macerated his flesh with many fasts, and frequent vigils; persisting in sobs and sighs; relinquishing all softness of bedding, having a hard bench for his bed, and for his house, a narrow cell; ever fixing his mind in heaven, desiring to dissolve and be with Christ, his sweetest Lover.

[7] *Legenda*, Lectio VI.

companion[8] who could share his dawning mystical experience, troubled with devastating headaches, acutely conscious of being a "failure," there came a time, at last, when he confessed to a longing for release by death. Yet, he held on his way: and in the end came to the Mystic's reward, and knew the vital difference between "acquired" and "infused" knowledge of God. His adversaries might, and did, impugn his learning, but he maintained the reality of his knowledge, small though it might be at first: *Ego Ricardus solitarius heremita dictus hoc melius cognovi quia expertus sum.*[9]

In spite of all hardships and disillusionments, Rolle remained obviously sane, whatever rationalists may say of the Mystics. No one can deny that he was often vehement against his fellow-mortals' stupidity, injustice and blundering: he fell into moods of lonely misgiving: he could stand ignorant and amazed in the face of Infinity. But he was no self-centred, self-conscious sentimentalist; never is there about him anything of the true *nevrosé,* no futile complaining

[8] In the fourth chapter of the second part of *The Fire of Love,* Rolle expresses a longing for "solace of my fellows"; for "a man . . who would show (me) the ghostly song that I desire to understand, and . . . would clearly unfold the melody of my mirth." He cries, *O Jesu, utinam vel sodalem in itinere ostendisses.*

The struggle had been so long and arduous that it is small wonder that he craved for a human "companion in the way." The Latin of Rolle, (quoted by Dr. Horstman), is more emphatic than Miss Comper's rendering from Richard Misyn's version.

It should, in this connection, be remembered that Rolle devotes a whole chapter of *The Fire of Love* (Part II. chapter IX.) to expounding not only the lawfulness but the necessity of human holy friendships. There were periods in his life when such friendships seem to have failed him, a trial which befell another Saint, S. Tersea. But he never wavers on the theory of friendship.

[9] "I, called Richard the solitary hermit, know this better because I have experienced it."

like Baudelaire's for instance when he proclaimed that he was

Blessé par le mystère et l'absurdité.

Moreover, all sorts of people, rationalist philosophers among them, show temper under a strain; but they do not admit such a lapse as a proof of their mental instability.

Thus far, Rolle seems to have proceeded on his steep way, when he went, being somewhere about 30, into Richmondshire; settling first near Ainderby, where the Recluse Margaret Kirkby had her cell. Henceforth, his life seems to have offered more opportunity for consecutive reading. He continued, too, the writing of Treatises, which became remarkably abundant in his later years.

It has been shown that, somehow or other, Rolle was conversant with parts, at any rate, of the writings of those three great Latin Fathers, whom Abbot Butler discussed in *Western Mysticism;* where also, he collected the main passages from their writings which bear on the matter, in order to show the view which, respectively, they took of Contemplation.

"Augustine," he wrote, "like all genuine mystics, warns us that this destruction of vices" (i.e., in the stage of Purgation) "must first be secured: only so, can anyone press on to the shrine of Contemplation."[10] Whether or no, Rolle had learned from S. Augustine about this necessary process of destroying vices, he had made some progress in it, by the time he settled at Ainderby.

Before his approach to Contemplation is dealt with, some clearing of ideas as to its nature may be useful and even necessary. Mgr. Farges, in his book recently translated into English, under the title, *Mystical Phenomena,* deals with this in precise, accurate explanation:—First, he defines the word:—

> "Mystical contemplation consists in an *experimental sensation of the divine,* that is, in an

[10] *Western Mysticism,* p. 32.

immediate intuition by the consciousness, more or less clear or obscure, of the *presence* in our souls of God or a supernatural object, the *essence* whereof remains unknown, which produces a sentiment of adoration or love, suspending more or less the powers of the soul."[11]

Then, he puts a definite question :—

"Is a certain *immediate apprehension of God,* the face-to-face apprehension of whom is the source of the happiness of the blessed in heaven, possible, at least in some much lower and very imperfect degree, for man while still a wayfarer on this earth?"[12]

To make the point precise, he adds :—

"If it were a question of the *beatific vision* properly so called—that is to say, the *clear* and *habitual* vision of the divine essence—there would be no doubt as to the reply. It is the constant teaching of the Church, and is even *de fide,* that saving our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-Man, this has been vouchsafed to no man in the world."[13]

Then, after this further explanation :—

"The only question which concerns us here is that of a *vision inferior* to that of the blessed, either a vision more or less clear but neither comprehensive nor habitual, or else a vision more or less obscure and passing,"[14]—

he refers to S. Thomas Aquinas, and answers his previous question in that Saint's sense :—

"The holy Doctor concludes, 'It is impossible for man in the state of this present life, to see God in *His essence, at least, unless he be detached from the senses.*'"[15]

Finally, he concludes his long argument, of which these quotations are the salient points, with the following statement :—

[11] *Mystical Phenomena,* p. 57.
[12] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[13] *Ibid.* p. 73.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 73.
[15] *Ibid.* p. 74.

> "There is nothing then opposed to the fact of the vision of the divine essence being granted on earth, by exception, and in very rare cases, to privileged saints, at least when they are in the ecstatic state and have completely lost the use of their corporal senses."[16]

No apology is needed, in so abstruse a matter as this, for a wholesale loan from a responsible Theologian. Amidst the multitude of books which have been published, few indeed have definitely grappled with this central problem. Either, their writers have taken for granted that readers would know the Church's traditional teaching, or, perhaps being ignorant of it themselves, they have fallen back on their own more or less philosophical speculations. To Mgr. Farges, a number of Bishops confided the task of lecturing, with all the prestige of being its first Principal, to the students of the University Seminary at Angers, on Ascetical and Mystical Theology. The book, based on lectures delivered during seven academic years, has been so well translated that henceforth English readers will be able to repair to an authoritative text-book on traditional mystical teaching.

Abbot Butler, discussing S. Augustine's exegesis of Psalm xli. wrote :—

> "The Psalmist desires to find God, that he may not only believe, but may also see somewhat. Here is formulated the fundamental postulate of Mysticism : that it is possible in this life to see somewhat of God—to have an experimental perception of Him."[17]

Western Mysticism is readily accessible to all students of the Mystics : therefore, here, it will suffice to remind readers that Dom Butler, discussing the *Act of Contemplation* as expounded by his three chosen Fathers, of the West, points out that S. Augustine expresses his mystical experiences as a vision of un-

[16] Op. cit., p. 75.

[17] *Western Mysticism*, p. 32.

changeable Truth and Light;[18] that S. Gregory's symbol is Light;[19] while S. Bernard dwells chiefly on the "contemplation of the heart" and it is in this that he principally places the mystical experience,[20] though he also speaks of "contemplation of the intellect."[21] He adds:—

> "Though S. Bernard's emphasis is on the 'contemplation of the heart,' his 'contemplation of the intellect' is of greater interest for the psychology and theology of mysticism."[22]

Precisely how far Rolle was acquainted with the works of these great Saints, or what degree of knowledge he possessed of their theories, it is impossible now to decide: obviously, by his frequent quotations from their writings he had some knowledge of them. There is one more writer, who had died just before Rolle's birth, but whose influence certainly touched him, the Seraphic Doctor, S. Bonaventura. Early in the thirteenth century, the Franciscans had, with other Orders, established themselves at Oxford. Grosseteste, without actually joining their Order, attached himself to them. As himself one of the most learned men in England, and well aware of its immediate needs, he fostered in them a devotion to learning, which had not been one of their original ideals. It can hardly be doubted that Rolle while there must have encountered, in some form or other, the theological and mystical teaching of S. Bonaventura; teaching which from its practical trend, and its insistence on love,—the work of the heart rather than of the intellect,—could not but attract him, whose interest was always less on the intellectual side than concentrated on the work of the heart and will. It is even possible that S. Bonaventura's short treatise, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, may have come in Rolle's way during his Oxford years. Written in seven chapters, based upon Psalm lxxxiii. 6, *Beatus*

[18] *Western Mysticism*, p. 48.
[19] *Ibid.* p. 110.
[20] *Ibid.* p. 149.
[21] *Ibid.* p. 148.
[22] *Ibid.* p. 151.

vir, cuius est auxilium abs te! ascensiones in corde suo disposuit, in valle lacrymarum in loco, quem posuit.[23] it deals with the "steps" by which man "ascends to God." Those were precisely what Rolle abandoned his home to find and mount.

He would find that S. Bonaventura's opening words of the first chapter summed up his own desire, and the essence of his point of view :—

> "Cum beatitudo nihil aliud sit, quam summi boni fruitio : et summum bonum sit supra nos : nullus potest effici beatus, nisi supra semetipsum ascendat, non ascensu corporali, sed cordiali. Sed supra nos levari non possumus nisi per virtutem superiorem nos elevantem. Quantumcumque enim gradus interiores disponantur, nihil fit, nisi divinum auxilium comitetur. Divinum autem auxilium comitatur eos qui petunt ex corde humiliter et devote ; et hoc est ad ipsum suspirare in hoc *lacrymarum valle,* quod fit per ferventem orationem. Oratio igitur est mater et origo sursum-actionis. Ideo Dionysius in libro de Mystica Theologia, volens nos instruere ad excessus mentales, primo praemittit orationem. Oremus igitur et dicamus ad Dominum Deum nostrum : *Deduc me, Domine, in via tua, et ingrediar in veritate tua; laetetur cor meum, ut timeat nomen tuum."*[24]

[23] "Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee. In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the place which He hath set."

[24] As beatitude is nothing but the fruition of the Highest Good, and as the Highest Good is beyond us, nothing can serve the blessed man but to ascend above himself, not by a bodily ascent but by that of the heart. For whatever interior steps are taken, nothing is achieved without divine aid. But divine aid does accompany those who ask out of a devout heart, humbly. Prayer, therefore, is the mother and source of all mounting-action. Therefore, Dionysius, wishing to instruct us concerning ecstasies of mind, in his book on Mystical Theology, puts prayer first. Let us, therefore, pray, and say to our Lord God, "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy way, and I will walk in Thy truth; let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy Name." (Psalm lxxxv. 11.)

S. Bonaventura goes on to say that "the universe of things is a ladder for ascending to God";[25] and that the blessed man follows this track in a threefold way, bodily, spiritual and divine.

The bodily way is to "be led in God's way": the second is for a man to enter his own mind, which is "the eternal image of God"; this is the spiritual way, or "walking in the truth of God." The third is to transcend ourselves to that which is eternal and beyond us, and this is "to rejoice in God, by knowledge and reverence of His Majesty."

Mr. Edmund Gardner, editing S. Bernard's *De diligendo Deo,* observes that it is "the simplest book of mediæval mysticism." He compares admiringly the "simplicity" of "Bernard's four degrees of love" with S. Bonaventura's "scale"; declaring that the "ladder of various steps by which the soul mounts up to union with God, such as the Victorines and S. Bonaventura constructed and elaborated, are obviously exceedingly difficult to harmonise with our normal ideas of what is meant by religious experience."[26]

It is tempting to ask if we are not "paying ourselves with words" when we apply such terms as "normal" to religious experience, at any rate in the region of mysticism? The wider our knowledge of the Saints' ways becomes, the less possible surely it seems to grade them. Perhaps the greatest service which William James' famous book rendered was, that by its title—which was widely familiar to general readers, if not all went further—it emphasised the reality of variety.

No doubt, if he knew it, Rolle valued S. Bernard's lovely book; not least because it chimed in so exactly with his own fervour; rather specially he must have appreciated the Saint's deft word-play:—*Causa*

[25] *Itin. Mentis.* cap. I.

[26] The *Book of St. Bernard on the Love of God:* edited by Edmund Gardner, p. 6.

diligendi Deum, Deus est; modus sine modo diligere.[27] But Rolle was never prone to the widely spread human error of treating complements as incompatibles: seldom, if ever, was he guilty of the fallacy of non-exclusive alternatives. Rather, he gathered from every hedge, and the resulting garland was the proof of his ineradicable originality. With his quick sensitiveness, he could hardly live in the North Riding without realising that the beauty of "natural things" is a "track" to God: and hence he would welcome S. Bonaventura's "second step of contemplation, in which we are guided to contemplate God in all creatures which reach our minds through our corporeal senses."[28] S. Bonaventura goes on to point out that the "five senses," on whose share in our whole outlook Rolle so often insists, are "five gates" whereby all things in the sensible world make their way to our minds. That he found these things lovely is obvious from his words about the sense of sight:—"By sight, sublime, shining and many-hued bodies find entrance."[29] Then, having enumerated sensible objects, according to our organs of sense, S. Bonaventura explicitly says:—"All these are tracks whereby we can spy out our God."[30]

It is worth while to emphasise this, since, not seldom, the mystics are censured as sour persons, rejecting all the invitations of natural beauty. Rolle, with his markedly direct simplicity, could easily follow S. Bonaventura along all such "tracks." But nothing, not even what Mr. Gardner regards as "complicated degrees" would ever entangle Richard's singularly free and bold methods.

Modern psychology's stress on the five senses leads to nothing really new, though its denial of extra-sense experience does. Love of Nature, with the five senses'

[27] "The cause of loving God is God: the manner is to love without measure."

[28] *Itin. Mentis.* cap. II. 1.

[29] *Ibid.* cap. II. 3.

[30] *Ibid.* cap. II. 7.

contribution to it, was not unknown to the mediæval Mystics, and S. Bonaventura was nowise singular in that respect.

Following after him, who after all did not originate the idea, Cardinal Bellarmine, in *The Mind's Ascent to God*, deals first with "man which is called the lesser world," and proceeds to consider "that huge mass which we commonly call the greater world."[31] And so considering, he admonishes those who would call unclean what God has made and cleansed:—

> "God willed that man should in some measure know Him through His creatures, and because no single created being could fitly represent the infinite perfection of the Creator, He multiplied creatures, and bestowed on each a certain degree of perfection, that from these we might form some idea of the goodness and perfection of the Creator. . . .
>
> Therefore, my soul, whenever thy sight or thy mind is arrested by anything which seems worthy of admiration, let that thing become a ladder by which thou risest to the knowledge of the perfection of thy Maker. . . . .
>
> But although the multitude of created things is wonderful, and a proof of the multiform perfection of the one God, still more wonderful is the variety which appears in that multiplication, and it leads us more easily to the knowledge of God; for it is not difficult with one seal to make impressions exactly alike, or to cast numberless letters in the same mould; but to vary shapes almost infinitely, which is what God has done in creation, this is in truth a divine work and most worthy of admiration. . . .
>
> This God of thine, tender and gentle, doth not command thee while thou art a pilgrim on this earth to put away from thee altogether all consola-

[31] *The Mind's Ascent to God*, by Blessed Robert Bellarmine Done into English from the Latin by Monialis, p. 21.

tion from creatures: rather it was in order that they might be of service to thee, that all things were fashioned."[32]

S. Teresa, too, in her harassed life, lived far from the beauty of the country; but she did not forget natural beauty nor its teachings. In the *Interior Castle* she draws lessons from water, she compares the soul to the silk-worm, which, however, she confesses she only knows by hear-say, reminding her sisters how "this large and ugly worm leaves the cocoon as a lovely little white butterfly." And it really does not matter if she does call a moth a butterfly; that cannot affect the fact that here and elsewhere she draws lessons from the beautiful processes of Nature.

All through the Mystics' writings this same thing occurs: the mistaken ascription to them of harsh severity is one of the errors bound to arise from neglect of the warning which the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* uttered, in his Preface:—"I charge thee . . . if any . . . shall read it . . . for to take him time to read it, speak it, write it, or hear it all over. For peradventure there is some matter therein, in the beginning or in the middle, the which is hanging and not fully declared where it standeth; and if it be not there, it is soon after, or else in the end. Wherefore, if a man saw one matter and not another, peradventure he might lightly be led into error."[33]

The kind of attitude to Nature which Rolle took can, in some degree, be guessed from his more autobiographical writings. It has already been noted that in *The Fire of Love* he said:—"I have loved a certain wilderness, and I chose to live far away from men." In the same book he enables us still further to perceive his external arrangements for Contemplation:—

> "The high love of Christ soothly stands in three things: in heat, in song, in sweetness. And

[32] Op. cit. chapters 2 and 3.

[33] *The Cloud of Unknowing*, edited by Dom Justin McCann, ch. i., p. 4.

> I am expert in mind that these three cannot long remain without good rest. For if I would contemplate standing, walking or lying, methought I lacked full mickle thereof in myself and meseemed desolate; wherefore constrained by need, that I might have and abide in high devotion, I chose to sit."[34]

Rolle had sanctified common-sense: he knew the limitations of poor Brother Ass. Never will he be "the man who will nowhere rest, but aye rake about."[35]

It is the solitary person who knows how many hours there are in the day, and, therefore, knows that no human strength avails for unbroken strain of "high devotion." It is rough-going on the northern moors, in the region of Rolle's "wilderness." Surely, often he must have sat on those hills, watching the shadows racing and chasing over the dividing dale at his feet: or have wandered on the moors, seeing their sombre darkness beneath heavy skies flash suddenly, when the sun momentarily broke through, into manifold purple and amethyst. To a quick, alert mind like his, changes in this physical world are but the counterpart of man's interior changing life. And so he would pull himself up, and as he so often says, in the more ascetical parts of his writings, "call home the five wits," and then settle down for Contemplation's hour. Thus would he precisely carry out the doctrine which, generations later, Bellarmine would proclaim as man's right guide to the due use of the five senses:—

> "This he" (God) "doth command, that thou use them" (the consolation of creatures) "moderately, temperately and with sobriety, and that thou cheerfully share them with those in need, that the creatures do not rule over thee, but thou over them, and that thou use them in such a manner as to find favour with God."[36]

However keenly Rolle was, at times, affected by the

[34] *The Fire of Love*, p. 66
[35] *Our Daily Work*, p. 157.
[36] Op. cit. p. 28.

external world, whether pleasantly by its beauty, or disagreeably with its untowardness, he knew as well as Bellarmine or any other mystic that times come when it must all be set aside, and contemplation's hour must flow on supreme and undisturbed :—

> " No man may be imbued with love of endless life, nor be anointed with heavenly sweetness, unless he be truly turned to God. It behoves truly he be turned to Him, and from all earthly things be altogether turned in mind, before he may be expert in the sweetness of God's love, even in little things."[37]

The force of this warning lies in the word " expert." Along the way, even Rolle was aware of and responsive to earthly things : but, in the consummation, they must be ruled out. No doubt, he takes a sterner view of " worldly things " than Bellarmine : in this same place he says that they are to be loved " little or nought but for need." And he emphasises it further by warning men not to " desire to hold to worldly things beyond their strait need " ; an elastic phrase after all, for even men's " strait needs " vary with their temperaments and circumstances.

Next, so closely connected with the right use of the senses, part of it indeed, there is " recollection " ; " the proximate preparation for contemplation " Abbot Butler calls it ; when the preliminary purgation has done at least some of its work. Dom Butler explains its meaning thus :—

> " The word ' recollection ' is taken, not in its present, secondary, sense of remembering, but in its primary sense of gathering together and concentrating the mind. It consists first in the effort to banish from the mind all images and thoughts of external things, all sense perceptions and thoughts of creatures ; then the reasoning processes of the intellect are silenced, and by this exercise of abstraction a solitude is produced,

[37] *The Fire of Love.* Bk. 1, ch. 1.

wherein the soul may operate in its most spiritual faculties."[38]

This is S. Augustine's "pouring out of his soul above himself," Rolle's "hold thy wits in thee, that none go out,"[39] and Cardinal Bellarmine's, "the creatures do not rule over thee but thou over them."

No one who reads Rolle can imagine that he, any more than any saint or sinner, found "prayer" easy:—

> "Keep thy limbs to their business to which they were made; and do not cast thine eyes about like a child; flourish not thine hands and leap not with thy feet. . . . And as thou orderest thine outward bearing when thou goest forth, look thou that thou beest devout within. . . If in going out thou canst not rest in saying thy prayers, go the softlier. Many things hinder thee in toiling to pray; weariness of limbs; men thou meetest who speak to thee; then thy five wits fleet out of ward, and then the devotion of him who prays, cools."[40]

So did distractions beset him as he travelled over his countryside. Still, he was far too balanced and aware to deny the possible value of the senses, spiritually; if his appreciating knowledge of Nature does not often enter his original treatises, it will not be difficult to discern it in his handling of the Psalter.

Rolle's way of life in fourteenth century England is remarkable. Yet it is a curious fact that outside England he seems to be mostly unknown to or neglected by students of Mysticism. For instance, his name does not occur in Père Poulain's long list, though both Walter Hilton and Mother Julian are mentioned. Mgr. Farges, in his short historical survey,—too short some may think for utility—mentions no English mystic, unless S. Anselm was naturalised.

So far as evidence remains, no living person about Richard led him along the "asperous way"; whatever

[38] *Western Mysticism*, p. 38.
[39] *Our Daily Work*, p. 114. [40] *Ibid.* p. 161.

human aid he had would seem to have reached him through books. And so, the sense of solitariness in his life is not strange, it could hardly be otherwise: but it was an unusual testing. S. Teresa, S. John of the Cross, often strike us as among the most sorely tried of the great mystical saints: yet however much they were misunderstood or censured, they were not solitaries, exploring an untried region, amidst an indifferent world. Rolle was. As he pursued his lonely road, in the midst of a social state so material and not seldom criminal, in a country from which war was not yet banished; as, exploring spiritual paths, he climbed over the wild ways of Yorkshire moors and dales, he was an actual pioneer of mystical adventures in this country of England. Without him, who can say if Walter Hilton and Mother Julian would have followed, just as they did, or even at all?

If his conviction were singular, for the moment confined to himself, it was unhesitating and unshakeable. He taught others without a trace of wavering: and they listened, some at least, as to one speaking with authority, which at last imposed itself on them because it was "infused" into him.

CHAPTER IV.

ROLLE, HERMIT AND MYSTIC.

As the candle is for the flame, so is the soul for God.
—GEORGE TYRRELL.

IN the early years, Rolle had passed through the bitterest stages of his purgation. In the *Incendium Amoris,* which possibly may have been written about 1330, when he was just past the middle of his not very long life, there are still references to the old trouble, arising out of his own hot temper and unusual methods which came into collision with untoward neighbours. But now, he has discerned the underlying use of it all :—

> "Thus have I known, that the more men have raved against me with words of backbiting, so muckle the more I have grown in ghostly profit. Forsooth, the worst backbiters I have had are those which I trusted before, as faithful friends. Yet I ceased not for their words from those things that were profitable to my soul; truly I used more study, and ever I found God favourable."[1]

It seems that by this time, Rolle had moved into Richmondshire, the tract of country which included the five wapentakes of Hang East, Hang West, Gilling East and Gilling West, and Hallikeld; given by William the Norman to his cousin, who was the first Earl of Richmond. Now, for him, the meaning of the word "dale" would change a little, for he had come to the region of the characteristic Yorkshire dale, a long, wide valley sprinkled over with a succession of little villages, hamlets or even small towns, in place of the narrow vales with scattered farms and homesteads,

[1] *The Fire of Love,* p. 70.

to which he was accustomed, in the dales on the other side of the Hambletons.

All his circumstances seem to have grown a little easier. Apparently he inhabited a cell about twelve miles from Ainderby in the Vale of York. His literary activity and his increased peace of mind suggest that by some arrangement his bodily needs were now provided for more permanently and reliably. Above all else, he had found an understanding and wise friend, in the anchoress of Ainderby, Margaret Kirkby. Professor Leuba wrote disdainfully of the fact that most great mystics have had an "intimate friend of the opposite sex."[2] But it would tax even his ingenuity to show any but salutary results from Rolle's friendship with Margaret, whose steady good sense acted as an anodyne upon his sensitive self. This friendship lasted until his death in 1349, and was mutually fruitful. For her guidance and help, he translated and made a Commentary on the Psalter, and also wrote for her one of his finest Treatises, perhaps the greatest of all, his Epistle, *The Form of Perfect Living*. In that, all sides of his thought and of his literary capacity are shewn. In all probability, it was one of his latest books. Anyhow, when he wrote it, peace had come to him: and though memory was not wholly emptied of the far-off, troubled days of his hermit-life, yet now he was content to include "back-biting" in his list of "sins of the mouth," and leave it so.

The last few years of his life were spent at Hampole, a few miles from Doncaster, where he settled near a Cistercian Nunnery. Throughout his maturer years, he devoted himself to writing, and to ministering, so far as a layman could, to these nuns' spiritual needs; not neglecting those of any in the world, whom he could reach. It is one of the curiosities of human ways that the place where he lived for so short a time, and which could have had no influence on him comparable to that of Pickering Lythe, and, later, Rich-

[2] *Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, pp. 63, 81, 92, 103, etc.

mondshire, should have become his cognomen; for everywhere he is known, if at all, as Richard of Hampole.

His writings may be divided into Eschatological, Ascetical, Mystical and Translations. Whether or no *The Pricke of Conscience* is his, it is, eschatologically, related to his undoubted work, *The Three Arrows of Doomsday*.[3] Rolle's views on the Four Last Things are not peculiar to him: they follow the lines of the ordinary teaching he would have received. His translations, so far as the most important, the Psalter, is concerned, will be dealt with in the next chapter. *The Mirror of S. Edmund*[4] was probably rendered by him from Latin into Middle English. If it should ever turn out that he was not its actual translator, nothing can remove the fact that his own writings show his acquaintance with it.

A large part of all he wrote is, perhaps, in the stricter sense of the words, predominantly ascetical rather than mystical. Still even in them mystical passages abound: and they show his steady growth in spirituality.

Professor Leuba contended that in the case of all the mystics whom he selected for consideration, "each . . . fell very early under the influence of two great ideals of monastic Christianity: self-surrender to God's will and chastity."

Nothing of the kind is true of Rolle: he was no doubt educated in the Christian Faith like other children in England in the fourteenth century. But the violent manner of his escape from home, when he determined to embark on a hermit's life, is sufficient proof of absence of any family pressure towards the monastic ideal.

Again, in common with other rationalistic philosophers, Professor Leuba attaches a wholly undue

[3] Translated pp. 161—172 in *The Minor Works of Richard Rolle*.

[4] *Minor Works*, pp. 94 et seq.

importance—contrary to all authoritative Catholic teaching about the Catholic mystics—to trances, raptures, ecstasies, stigmata, levitation and "abnormal" occurrences in general. It is worth while, therefore, to point out that only once Rolle draws attention to his ecstasy. Indeed it would be hard to find a saner, more humanly "natural" boy and man than he was, whether within or without the family of the Saints. Perhaps the most complete and systematic combination of asceticism and mysticism which he ever achieved was the short *Emendatio Vitae,* rendered into Middle English by Richard Misyn[5] in the first half of the fifteenth century. Its date, in Rolle's life, is uncertain, but judging by the emphasis laid in the early chapters on eschewing the sins of the flesh, it would seem to be an early work. Nevertheless, the later chapters show that Rolle, when he wrote it knew the real nature of genuine contemplation, i.e., of the "infused" vision of God. In the eighth chapter, he writes:—

> "As the works and uses of saints are divers, so are their meditations divers . . . whiles all are one in being, they are of divers needs, and in one righteousness they are led to God by divers paths. Some go by a low path, some by a mean, and some by a high. The higher path is given to him that is ordained from eternity to love Christ more, not because he works more than others or gives more or suffers more, but because he loves more. . . . No man may set himself in any of these paths, but he takes to that which God chose him."

What can such differentiation of "paths" mean but that classification which,—coming much later when attention and thought given to mystical processes led necessarily to a *system,*—divided "acquired" from "infused" contemplation?—the former being separated into vocal, mental and affective, and the prayer

[5] Miss Comper included a translation of this in *The Fire of Love,* pp. 193—242, with the title—"The Mending of Life."

of simple regard: while the term contemplative was, strictly, kept for "infused" prayer.

Perhaps then this little work, some parts of which appear again in *The Form of Perfect Living*, may have been written about mid-way in his stormier years. We know that the first period after his flight was solitary. The *Incendium Amoris* is, more than most, autobiographical. In chapter XIV. he praises solitary life for those who would be God's lovers. This it may be noted is no sigh of morbidity, nor peculiar to him. Mgr. Farges wrote:—

> "The solitude of the desert or of the cloister, or, at least that retreat and silence obtained by holy stratagem even in the midst of the world, is the usual condition and the favoured spot, for the divine rendezvous."[6]

This is the consentient witness of holy men: Thomas à Kempis assures the lover of God thus:—

> "Christ will come unto thee, showing thee His consolation, if thou prepare within thee a mansion worthy of Him."[7]

From a different angle S.John of the Cross wrote:—

> "God dwells in a secret and hidden way in all souls, in their very substance, for if He did not, they could not exist at all. This dwelling of God is very different in different souls . . . . in some He dwells contented; in others displeased: in some as in His own house, giving His orders and ruling it; in others as a stranger in a house."[8]

This species of "solitariness" seems to resemble the "holy stratagem" of which Mgr. Farges speaks.

Dr. Pusey, commenting on Hosea ii. 14, "I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart," referred to solitude in its more ordinary meaning:—

> "It is in solitude that He speaks to the soul and is heard by her, warning, refreshing, piercing, penetrating through every fold, until He reaches

[6] *Mystical Phenomena*, p. 91. [8] *The Living Flame*, stanza iv
[7] *Imitatio Christi*, II. 1.

the very inmost heart and dwells there. He infuseth hope of pardon, kindleth love, enlighteneth faith, giveth feelings of child-like trust, lifteth the soul tremblingly to cleave to Him whose voice she has heard within her. Then, His infinite beauty touches the heart: His Holiness, Truth, Mercy, penetrate the soul: in silence and in stillness, the soul learns to know itself and God."

It might be thought that the solitude of the great stretch of Yorkshire moorland would suffice. Yet, even in those seldom and fortuitously traversed wilds, there could be no absolute security against interruptions: and it is protection against any kind of irruption of the external world which the mystic seeks. Therefore, in the next chapter to that in which he had pleaded for the necessity of solitude, Rolle tells us:—

"I was sitting forsooth in a chapel."

This apparently was nearly four years after he left home. This is the passage, relating to his single recorded ecstasy:—

"Whiles truly I sat in this same chapel, and in the night before supper, as I could, I sang psalms, I beheld above me as it were the noise of readers, or rather, singers. Whiles also I took heed praying to heaven with my whole desire, suddenly, I wot not in what manner,[9] I felt in me the noise of song, and received the most liking heavenly melody which dwelt with me in my mind. . . . I was not known by them that saw me as, peradventure, if they had known me, they would have honoured me above measure, and so I should have lost part of the most fair flower, and should have fallen into desolation.

In the meanwhile, wonder caught me that I should be taken up to so great mirth whiles I was

[9] Similarly, S. Teresa, both in her *Life* and in *The Interior Castle*, relating her divers mystical experiences, says over and over again that though she "knew" that what she described really happened, she could nowise explain how.

> in exile; and because God gave gifts to me that I knew not to ask, nor trowed that any man, not the holiest, could have received any such thing in this life."

Two points here are of first-rate importance, as showing that Rolle stood in the true, fully-instructed line of genuine mystics. First, he realised that such a gift was not to be reckoned as a signal honour, a fact which S. Teresa emphasises over and over again in teaching her sisters, and that self-complacency about such experiences destroys the recipient's virtue. Secondly, he realised that in this life, habitual contemplation of the divine essence is impossible, and that this was, perhaps the very first, transient gleam in his life, such as God occasionally sends, here and now to a few; akin to S. Augustine's experience, "In the flash of a trembling glance my mind came to That Which Is."[10]

That, in this life, contemplation is partial and transient was Rolle's settled teaching, a view he held in common with all Catholic mystics. In *The Form of Perfect Living* he wrote definitely :—

> "For contemplation is a sight, and they see into heaven with their ghostly eye. But thou shalt wit that no man has perfect sight of heaven, whilst they are living bodily here."

Perhaps on the whole, Rolle may seem, if we compare him with S. Teresa, or still more with S. John of the Cross, much less analytical in mind; and possibly, at any rate as a rule, less intense in emotion. There is something about him always of the unsurprised receptiveness of a child: he takes what is given to him, and records it with disarming simplicity. It is quite true that S. Teresa wrote out her experiences because her Director required it; and that Rolle, lying under no such obligation, told his story as part of his life-long effort to win men to God. But S. Teresa had so evidently "sorted" her experience, had considered it,

[10] *Confessions*, Bk. VII.

speculated about it. In spite of her repeated assertions that "we women have scanty wits," and that therefore she is only a weak and ignorant woman expecting the wise to fill in the gaps she leaves, yet her natural inclination to what is now called psychology, led her to bring order, by constant reflection, into that mass of experience. However it might appear to her humility, she did grasp the main problems, and the great phrases in which she sets them forth come quickly from her pen. There is, e.g., the description of her ecstasy in Chapter XX. of the *Life,* where she explains that ecstasy is irresistible, like a great eagle, seizing the ecstatic and bearing him or her away on its wings. Rolle, sitting in his chapel in Yorkshire, quietly singing psalms "as he could," relates so simply how rapture slipped insensibly into his being, as it were heat and song.

If he wrote *The Mending of Life* before he went into Richmondshire, the experiences in the Chapel would have enabled him to write the beautiful closing chapters on Contemplation.

Further, if it be a comparatively early work, his balanced advice on abstinence, and upon poverty and wealth are a singular proof of his essential sanity, and of his good judgment, even in youth. With convincing simplicity he declares:—

> "Covetousness of the world and the love of God are contrary, and rest not together in one soul. The place is so strait, that one falls out."[11]

The pictorial humour which could make that last sentence is inconceivably far from anything like sentimentality and extravagance. Then there is his description of true and false poverty:—

> "What is poverty of spirit but meekness of mind, by the which a man knows his own infirmity? . . . Of wilful[12] poverty taken in this wise, proceed virtues and marvellousness untrowed. Not as some that change their clothes

[11] *The Mending of Life,* Ch. ii. [12] Deliberate.

> and not their souls: soothly it seems they forsake riches, yet they cease not to gather innumerable vices.
>
> What is worse than a poor proud man? . . . . 'Learn of Me,' He says, 'for I am meek and lowly of heart.' He says not, 'Learn of Me for I am poor.' Truly, by itself, poverty is no virtue, but rather wretchedness; nor for itself praised, but because it is the instrument of virtue, and helps to get blessedness, and makes many eschew many occasions of sinning."[13]

And Rolle goes further still. He admits that it is lawful for men to say "we are sick, it behoves us to keep our necessities of life."[14] And though he pronounces them "the less worthy, for they dare not suffer anguish, poverty and need for God," yet he will not deny the possibility that "by the grace of God they may come to the height of virtue and lift themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things."[15] Finally, he tells his whole mind on the matter:—

> "To seek more than enough is foul covetousness; to keep back necessaries is frailty; but to forsake all things is perfectness."[16]

This may be called Rolle's ascetical view of poverty. And doubtless, it balances and sets in its right light his vehemence of invective against the selfish rich. But any account of his doctrine of poverty would be incomplete which omitted the view taken by his mystical self. This, in its highest form, may be found in his tiny Epistle, *Praise of the Name of Jesus*:—

> "I went about by covetousness of riches, and I found not Jesus . . . for He let me know by His grace that He is not found in the land of softly living. . . Therefore, I turned by another way, and I ran about by poverty and I found Jesus, poorly born into the world, laid in a crib, lapped

[13] *The Mending of Life*, Ch. iii.
[14] *Ibid.*, Ch. iii.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*

in cloths. . . . . Therefore Jesus is not found in riches but in poverty."[17]

He is ascetic, without doubt: but not emotionally fantastic. Then in a similar, and even gentler way he treats of fasting:—

> "The unwise and untaught, which have never felt the sweetness of Christ's love, trow that unwise abstinence be holiness. . . But truly abstinence by itself is not holiness, but if it be discreet it helps us to be holy. If it be indiscreet, it lets holiness, because it destroys discipline without which virtues are turned to vice."[18]

Just so, S. Teresa would ordain that some sister, growing fancifully imaginative, should pray less and eat and sleep more.[19] Finally Rolle made short work of the whole race of religious *poseurs*:—

> "There are some covetous of vain-glory that in no wise will be held as common men: for either they eat so little that they always draw the speech of men to them, or they procure other manner of meats to be seen diverse from others: whose madness and obstinacy be far from me."[20]

While he was at Ainderby, or possibly, later on at Hampole, he wrote, for Margaret Kirkby,—besides the Commentary on the Psalter—a singularly comprehensive and beautiful treatise, *The Form of Perfect Living,* already mentioned.

He acted as adviser to and wrote Epistles for others besides Margaret. One of the most urgently pleading

[17] *Minor Works,* p. 52.

[18] *The Mending of Life,* Ch. iv.

[19] *The Interior Castle.* IV. III. 11, 12. "The more they lose self-control the more do their feelings get possession of them, because the frame becomes more feeble. They fancy this is a trance and call it one, but I call it nonsense: it does nothing but waste their time and injure their health. . . . . This state lasted with a certain person for eight hours. . . . She was cured by being made to eat and sleep well, and to leave off some of her penances."

[20] *The Mending of Life,* Ch. iv.

of them all he addressed to an unnamed nun of Yeddingham. This Benedictine Priory, familiarly called Little Mareis, its site being known as Parvo Marisco,—it is still called Marisches—was about four miles from Thornton. About 1162, Roger de Clere bought Sinnington from his over-lord, for 20/-. With Helewise de Clere he founded Yeddingham Priory in that same decade. Ralph, succeeding him, gave Sinnington Church to the nuns, a grant confirmed by Henry III., in 1246, 7. In 1239, the then Prioress of Yeddingham and the Prior of Guisborough, acting for their respective Communities, agreed that the nuns should receive from the Canons of Guisborough four ox-gangs of land, with their farm buildings, in Sinnington, a place about twelve miles from Yeddingham, but more than fifty from Guisborough, with, too, the whole stretch of the North Riding moors and the Clevelands intervening. In return, the nuns undertook to pay 15/- a year: to maintain the Chapel of S. Michael, which stood probably to the north of the Parish Church, though there is some doubt about the exact sites. This Chapel, Ralf de Clere had given to the Canons of Guisborough. Further, the nuns promised to keep up other buildings, and to be responsible for the "better entertaining the canons when there, with white litter, candles and fewel"; and finally to see that Mass was said three times a week in S. Michael's.

The Prioress of Yeddingham, during Rolle's lifetime, was Alice, who died in 1300. Then came another Alice, who died in 1335. According to Dugdale, her death occurred in 1331. If that were so, she must have been succeeded by a third of the name. Next came Margaret de Lulton, who died in 1345: three years later Joan de Percehay was elected to the office. In 1314, Archbishop William Greenfield, who died in the following year, held a visitation.

Whether the Priory was not in the most satisfactory state possible, or whether he was unusually and minutely careful cannot now be known. Anyhow, he

sent the Prioress a mass of injunctions, enjoining particular care in house management, and in individual dealings with the nuns, while insisting on the necessity of avoiding all harshness. If he found nothing actually wrong, perhaps he supposed himself to have detected some want of tact. Possibly, he was mistaken, for not every man weighs evidence well, when women give it about another. Whatever may have been the case, he advised the prioress "not to be too rigid nor too gentle," and "to mingle oil with wine." Counsel, which if too vague to be offensive, was scarcely effectual guidance. In this Priory, then, there was a nun whom Rolle guided. From the *Ego dormio,* which he wrote for her, we may gather that he had somehow singled her out from the rest:—

> "To thee I write specially, for I hope there is more goodness in thee than in any other; and that thou wilt give thy thought to fulfil in deed that which thou seest to be profitable to thy soul; and that thou wilt give thyself to the life in the which thou mayest most wholly offer thine heart to Jesus Christ, and be least in this world's business."[21]

It may seem that a dedicated nun should already have known of and done this much. Perhaps that troublesome little bit of property at Sinnington,—travelling in those days being rough and difficult,—may have over-occupied the Sisters at Yeddingham. Or more likely, Rolle detected in this one's particular temperament possibilities for true contemplation. He tries to bring her gently to this higher level:—

> "Peradventure now thou thinkest it hard to give thine heart away from all earthly things, from idle speech, from all fleshly love, and go by thy lone to watch and pray and think on the joy of Heaven: and to have compassion upon the Passion of Jesus Christ, and to picture the pain of hell which is ordained for sinful men. But surely,

[21] *Ego dormio. Minor Works,* pp. 63—77.

when once thou art used to this, it will seem to thee lighter and sweeter than ever did any earthly solace to thee."[22]

She can hardly have made conspicuous progress, or why should Rolle remind her that :—

"Everything we see with our eyes perishes and passes. The weal of the world wanes into wretchedness. Pride and painting drift into sorrow. Delights and gallantries shall full soon stink. . . .

But when thou hast lived well in the Commandments of God and hast stiffly kept thyself from all Deadly Sins and repaid Christ to that point, bethink thee that thou wilt love God more, and do better with thy soul and become perfect. . . . . And when thine heart is wholly ordained to the service of God, and all thought of the world is put out of it, then wilt thou desire to steal away by thy lone, to think of Christ and to be in great praying. . . . And when thou art by thy lone, give thyself much to saying the psalms of the Psalter, and Pater Noster and Aves ; and take not care that thou say many, but that thou say them well, and with all the devotion that thou canst, lifting up thy thought to Heaven. Better is it to say seven Psalms desiring Christ's love, having thy heart in thy prayer, than seven hundred while thou lettest thy thoughts pass in vanities to earthly things."[23]

These recommendations seem elementary, made to a religious. Still more unusual, addressed to a nun, is his particular advice about overcoming the world, the devil and the flesh,[24] which ends with a passage which possibly throws light on the semi-luxury, which seems to have crept in :—

"Thou wilt not then covet to be rich, to have

[22] *Ego dormio*, p. 65.
[23] *Ibid.* pp. 67—69.
[24] *Ibid.* pp. 70, 71.

many and fair mantles, many gallantries. . . . Thou who hast now five or six, wilt then think two mantles, or one enough."[25]

He ends with this injunction :—

"I will that thou beest never idle, but ever either speaking of God, or working some notable work, or thinking principally of Him, that thy thought may be ever having Him in mind."

Thereupon follows a Meditation on the Passion of our Lord, designed for her help: the end of it is suffused with Rolle's adoring love of his Lord.

Who this nun was is not known; possibly they may have been friends in the old home days of their childhood. Or there is another possibility. Rolle wrote this in his later years, for in the attribution of it to his authorship he is explicitly called Richard, hermit of *Hampole*. So perhaps even from the parts about Doncaster, he sometimes wandered back to his old haunts, and saw again some old friends. No information of this sort is to be found in the *Legenda*. Only once, in Lection VI., is reference made to the multiplicity of his writings, and to his mode of adjusting his natural absorption in work with the calls made on him. The passage is long, and so may be given best perhaps in a translation :—

"But wonderful and particularly useful were the works of this holy man, in the holy exhortations by which he turned many to God, and by his honey-sweet writings, whether tracts or little books composed for the edification of his neighbours, all which sound like sweetest harmony in the hearts of devout people. . . . . Once, when he sat in his cell, after dinner, the lady of the house, with many other persons, came to him, and found him writing very fast. They besought him to desist from writing, and to propound to them some words of edification. He at once uttered to them perfect exhortations to virtue, to renuncia-

[25] *Ego dormio*, p. 71.

> tion of worldly vanities, and to the establishment of God's love in their hearts. However, he did not on that account leave off writing, for two hours on end, but went on writing as quickly as before, which he could nowise have done, had not the Spirit directed his hand and tongue all the time, because for the most part, these occupations were contrary to each other, and his spoken words were totally unlike in meaning to the words which he was writing."

While writing to a nun who lived so comparatively far away as Yeddingham, he was also writing for one of the Sisters in the Cistercian Priory, hard by his last cell. This nunnery had been founded towards the end of the twelfth century by William de Clerefai and his wife, Avice de Tany.

Their foundation, with their other gift of two Churches, was confirmed by the well known Archbishop of York, Roger de Pont l'Évêque, who was at York from 1154 to 1181.

The Priory got into difficulties about the middle of the thirteenth century, so that Archbishop Walter Giffard (1266—1279), a man well versed in "affairs," as he had been Lord Chancellor, and also in Edward I's absence, regent, forbade the Prioress to receive any more nuns without his leave, as the revenues were insufficient to maintain the Order as it was.

In 1312, Agnes de Pontefracto was chosen Prioress. The Archbishop's warnings had not put matters right: heavy debts had been incurred, it was necessary for the authorities to deal also with other irregularities touching the life of the Priory. Margaret de Hecke was elected Prioress either in 1319 or 1320. No other name of a Prioress occurs till 1348, when that of "Maud" is found, therefore it would seem that Margaret de Hecke was the one known to Rolle. Evidently, the bad management, resulting in debt, was not corrected, for, four years after Rolle's death, John of

Thoresby, Archbishop of York, appointed a Commission to inquire into the whole matter. Orders were issued that if the alleged financial collapse proved to be true, and the nuns were really in danger of dispersion, instant steps for its reform and good conduct in future were to be taken; and if it seemed desirable, a new Prioress should be chosen.

To one of these nuns, in this time of distress, Rolle addressed his Epistle—*The Commandment of Love to God*. This is admitted to be undoubtedly a genuine work of his, it bears his name. At the top of the Epistle, underneath the title, in the MS. Rawlinson (A 389 fol. 81), is the name "Richard Hermit." At the end of the MS. Camb. Dd. V. 64, the words *Explicit tractatus Ricardi Hampole scriptus cuidam sorori Hampole*[26] are written. Thus far, the student is on as firm ground as can be hoped for in the matter of Rolle's writings.

There is nothing in it to suggest that Rolle felt that there was anything gravely wrong with these nuns: at the same time, as to the nun of Yeddingham, he writes advice which seems to hint that perfection is still a distant goal.

It is not impossible that gossip and mutual fault-finding, those deadly evils in all communities, whether secular or religious, may have found a lodgment at Hampole. For, at the very outset, Rolle warns his friend to "be of little speech . . . for janglers and backbiters who damage other men's lives with wicked words, and all those who love their own condition first of all, or who despise any condition in which a man may be safe, they have no more sight in their soul of the Love of God than a bat's eye hath of the sun." The Epistle, as it proceeds, gives some slight impression that Rolle may have been a little uneasy about these good women, whose spiritual affairs were at least in part in his charge:—

[26] "Here ends Richard Hampole's Tract, written for a certain Hampole Sister." *(Minor Works:* pp. 80—91.)

> "If thou hast delight in the name of religion, look that thou hast more delight in the deeds which belong to religion. Thine habit saith that thou hast forsaken the world, that thou art given to God's service, that thou delightest thee not in earthly things: look then that it be in thy heart as it looks in men's sight—for nothing can make thee religious save virtues and cleanness of soul in charity. If thy body be clothed without as thine Order wills, look that thy soul be not naked within—that which thine Order forbids: but be thy soul naked from all vices, and warmly wrapped in love and meekness."

Perhaps, and that constantly increasing load of debt makes such a possibility the more likely, these religious maintained too much commerce with the world they had essayed to leave. Rolle gives some colour to such a state, further on, when he writes:—

> "But peradventure thou wilt say, 'I cannot despise the world, I cannot find it in my heart to punish my body, and it behoveth me to love fleshly friends, and to take ease when it comes.'"

It is worthy of note that no passage of high mystical meaning occurs anywhere in this Tract. Not love, because it is the only possible way, is his theme here; but the *commandment* of love to God, with clear and reiterated insistence on the pains consequent on ordinary ill-doing, and on the rewards promised to all well-doers. It lacks the ardour of *The Fire of Love,* of *The Praise of the Name of Jesus,* of the *De delectacione in Deo,* of *The Oneness of God with man's Soul.*

Further, though it divides love—as Rolle does in *The Form of Perfect Living*—into Insuperable, Inseparable and Singular, and expounds these different kinds or degrees, yet anyone who will compare the two cannot but be struck with the fundamental difference between the two expositions. To the nun of Hampole, apparently hardly yet aware how "asperous" the "Way" must prove, he offers it as if it were

something of which she has not begun to comprehend the initial conditions. But to Margaret Kirkby, in that eighth chapter of the *Regula,* which with the tenth is his high-water mark of ecstatic praise of Love, he tries, so far as human speech avails, to unfold the glory and blessedness of the utter self-surrender of perfect limitless Love :—

" I would that thou mightest win to the highest,"

he said to that woman and proved friend whom he knew so well. And again :—

> " *Singular* love is when all comfort and solace is closed out of thine heart, but of Jesus Christ alone. . . . For the sweetness of Him in this degree is so comforting and lasting in His love, so burning and gladdening, that he or she who is in this degree can as well feel the fire of love burning in their soul, as thou canst feel thy finger burn if thou puttest it in the fire. . . . Then thy soul is loving Jesus . . . to Him singing : of Him burning ; in Him resting. Then the song of praise and of love has come. . . . One thing I tell thee, it is of heaven, and God gives it to whom He will, but not without great grace coming before."

The chapter closes with his great hymn to Love :—

> " For love my thought has fast, and I am fain to fare away. I stand still mourning for the loveliest of lore. . . . The brand of sweet burning for it holds me aye : from place and from playing : till I may get sight of my sweet One, Who wends never away. In wealth be our waking, without hurt or night. My love is everlasting, and longs unto that sight."

He never rose to these heights in addressing the nun of Hampole. In her case it would seem the very first steps remained to be taken upon the mystical way. But with Margaret he cannot leave it even so. He has learned that love is the key of every door ; that it is the beginning and middle and end of all true life, of

all real achievement; and so, in the tenth chapter, he reveals the whole. But first it is of very practical, comprehensive love that he writes :—

> "Love makes us one with God. . . Love is the thing through which God loves us, and we Him, and each one of us loves others. Love is the desire of the heart, aye thinking on that it loves."

Also he shows that such love as this is quite compatible with those things which some value so highly, good sense, predilection, every-day wisdom :—

> "*In what state may men most love God?* I answer in such state as it be that men are in most rest of body and mind, and least occupied with any needs or business of this world. . . And I have loved for to sit : for no penance nor fantasy, nor that I wished men to talk of me, nor for no such thing : but only because I knew that I loved God more and longer lasted within the comfort of love, than going or standing or kneeling. For sitting am I most in rest, and my heart most upward. But therefore, peradventure, it is not best that another should sit."

So, sitting at rest, with his "heart most upward," perhaps he broke into that glowing description of love, where everything else melts and is fused into pure fervour :—

> "We shall force ourselves to clothe us in love, as iron or coal does in the fire, as the air does in the sun, as the wool does in the dye. The coal so clothes itself in fire that it is fire. The air so clothes itself in the sun that it is light. And the wool so substantially takes the dye that it is like it. In this manner shall a true lover of Jesus Christ do : his heart shall so burn in love that it shall be turned into the fire of love, and be as it were all fire."

Language fails, as S. Hilary hinted, when it attempts the "deep things of God." But, the fourteenth century

had a capacity for love such as may surprise not a few now-a-days. In the *Anehede,* Rolle had declared that "the sovereign and essential joy is in the love of God, by Himself and for Himself." Sovereign and essential!

Not only Rolle, but his great contemporary, Jan van Ruysbroeck, climbed these steep heights:—

> "In this enjoyment, we are idle: for God works by Himself when He ravishes all these loving spirits out of themselves, and changes and perfects them in the unity of His Spirit. There are we all one fire of love, which is a greater thing than aught else God ever made. Every spirit is a live coal, which God has lit in the fire of His infinite love. All together, we make one blazing brazier,—which can never again be extinguished,—with the Father and the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, there where the Divine Persons are Themselves ravished into the unity of Their Essence, in the bosom of that bottomless abyss of purest blessedness."[27]

And so, both of them carried on the teaching of the Seraphic Doctor:—

> "But if thou seekest the way in which these things are done, ask grace, not doctrine; desire, not intellect; the wrestling of prayer, not the study of reading; the bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man; heat, not clarity; not light, but

[27] "En jouissant nous sommes oisifs; car Dieu opère seul lorsqu'il ravit hors d'eux-mêmes tous les esprits aimants, les transforme et les consomme dans l'unité de son Esprit. Là, nous sommes tous un seul feu d'amour, ce qui est plus grand que tout ce que Dieu a jamais fait. Chaque esprit est un charbon ardent, que Dieu a allumé dans le feu de son amour infini. Et tous ensemble nous sommes un brasier enflammé, qui ne peut plus jamais être éteint, avec le Père et le Fils, dans l'union du Saint-Esprit, là où les divines personnes sont ravies elles-mêmes dans l'unité de leur essence, au sein de cet abîme sans fond de la béatitude la plus simple." *(Les Sept Degrés de l'Echelle d'Amour Spirituel,* Ch. xiv. Translated into French by the Benedictines of Saint-Paul de Wisques.)

fire, utterly burning and in God changing everything to intensest feeling and most burning love."[28]

Well might Rolle cry:—

"Lo, Margaret, I have told thee shortly the Form of Living and how thou mayest come to perfection."

[28] "Si autem quaeras, quomodo haec fiant, interroga gratiam, non doctrinam; desiderium, non intellectum; gemitum orationis, non studium lectionis; sponsum, non magistrum; Deum, non hominem; caliginem, non claritatem; non lucem, sed ignem totaliter inflammentem et in Deum excessivis unctionibus et ardentissimis affectionibus transferentem."
(*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum.* Cap. VII.)

CHAPTER V.

ROLLE AND THE PSALTER.

Among the Middle English Writings in MSS. which actually bear Rolle's name, and are, therefore, believed to be, beyond doubt, his, is a *Commentary on the Psalter*. A Northern MS. of it exists at University College, Oxford. This, in 1884, was edited by Mr. Bramley, and published by the Oxford University Press. Other MSS. exist, one at Newcastle, another in the Bodleian, another in the Library of Worcester Cathedral; some extracts from which latter Dom Bernard of Pershore Abbey gave in *Laudate*, the Community's Magazine, in the March and September numbers of 1923.

In a metrical preface, prefixed to the Bodleian MS. of this *Commentary*, the anonymous writer expressly says that Rolle wrote it at the request of Margaret Kirkby:—

"But as the Psalms are full dark in many a place,
whoso will take heed,
And the saying is full mirk, every line whoso will
read,
It needeth exposition, written well with a man's
hand,
To stir to more devotion, and it the better to
understand.
Therefore, a worthy, holy man, called Richard
Hampole,
Whom the Lord Who can do all taught loyally in
His school,
Glossed the Psalter that here ensues, in the English
tongue securely;
At a worthy Recluse's prayer, called Dame Margaret Kirkby,

This same Psalter in every step is the self-same
in sooth,
That lieth at Hampole in safety, at Richard's own
burying place,
That he wrote with his own hand, to Dame Mar-
garet Kirkby,
And there it lieth in chain bonds, in that same
nunnery."

It is a translation of the Psalms into Middle English, with a very short commentary upon each verse in turn.

In the list which Dr. Horstman gives of Rolle's Latin Works, there is an *Expositio Psalterii* (MS. CCCO. 193, St. John's, Oxford, 195[1]). Four pages later Dr. Horstman wrote, of the English *Commentary on the Psalter,* "it is substantially a translation of the *Expositio Psalterii,* the commentary following each verse."

The author of the relevant chapter in the *Cambridge History of English Literature,* Mr. Whiting, says:— "His labour at the Psalter had a wide-reaching influence and appears in many forms: a Latin Commentary upon it is one of his most original works: and in another of them, the Latin version is followed by an English translation and a commentary. . . . . It is really a translation of Peter Lombard's Commentary, and is, therefore, devoid of originality and personal touches."[2]

This seems a curious difference of opinion, even between scholars. Dr. Horstman, of course, spent long and minute labour on the Rolle MSS. accessible to him: the chapter in the Cambridge History does not at any rate suggest research so patient and extensive.

Rolle prefixed a Prologue to his English Commentary: he specifically disclaims thorough-going originality. He claims the support of "holy doctors," of whom, then and there, he names not a single one. Peter Lombard, whose own Commentary was a com-

[1] Library of Early English Writers, *Richard Rolle of Hampole,* Vol. II., p. xxxvii.
[2] Op. cit., p. 46.

pilation from the primitive Doctors and from teachers of the Middle Ages, may possibly have been one. S. Augustine certainly must have been.

The Psalter Commentary itself does, as a matter of fact, recall Rolle's manner of thought and expression: and his intention is clearly shown in the Prologue, of which the following is a rendering:—

(Here begins the Prologue of the Book.)

"Great abundance of ghostly comfort and joy in God comes into the hearts of those who say or sing devoutly the Psalms in loving Jesus Christ. They drop sweetness into men's souls, and pour delight into their thoughts, and kindle their wills with the fire of love; making them hot and burning within, and fair and lovely in Christ's eyes. And those who last in their devotion, they raise them into contemplative life; and oft-times into the sound and mirth of heaven. The song of psalms chases away fiends, excites angels to our help; it does away sin; it pleases God; it makes perfectness; it does away and destroys annoyance and anger of soul, and makes peace between body and soul. It brings desire for heaven, and contempt for earthly things. Soothly, this shining book is a chosen song before God; as a lamp lighting our life; healing for a sick heart; honey to a bitter soul; dignity of ghostly persons; tongue of privy virtues, the which inclines men to meekness, and makes kings underlings to poor men, fostering bairns familiarly. In them is so great fairness of understanding and medicine of words, that this book is called a garden enclosed, well sealed up, a paradise full of appeals. Now with wholesome lore it brings disturbed and stormy souls into clear and peaceful life; now admonishing to forgo sins with tears; now promising joy to righteous men; now menacing the wicked with hell.

The song that delights the heart and teaches the

soul is made a voice of singing, and with angels whom we cannot hear we mingle words of loving; so that verily he may trow himself an alien from very life who has not the delectability of this gift. O wonderful sweetness, which waxes not sour through this world's corruption, but, lasting aye in its own dignity, is waxing in grace of purest softness. All earthly gladness and delight wanes and at the last wilts into nought: but it (i.e., the sweetness) the longer time it has, the greater it is, and most of all in man's death, when love is perfected.

This book is called the Psalter; which name it hath from an instrument of music, called in Hebrew *nablum,* in Greek psaltery, from *psallo,* which in English is to touch. And it is of the cords, and gives the sound from the upper part through touch of the hand. Also, this book teaches to keep the Ten Commandments, and to work not for earthly things, but rather for heaven that is above; and so we give a sound from upward at the touching of our hand, when all that we do well is for God's love. Also this book is divided into thrice fifty psalms: in the which three states of a Christian man's life are signified: the first in penance; the second in righteousness; the third in praises of endless life. The first are ended by *Miserere mei Deus;* the second in *Misericordiam et judicium cantabo.* The third at *Omnis spiritus laudet Dominus.* Of all Holy Writ, this book is the most used in Holy Church's services; because in it is perfection of divine paging; for it contains everything that other books draw out at length; that is, the teaching of the Old Testament and the New. Therein are described the rewards of good men, the pains of evil men, the discipline of penance, the waxing in righteous life, the perfection of holy men who pass to heaven, the life of active men, the medita-

tion of contemplatives and the joy of contemplation, the highest that can be for a man living and feeling in his body. Also, what sin rives from man's soul, and what penance restores. There is no need to tell that same here, for through the grace of God thou shalt find these made clear in their places.

This Scripture is called the book of Christ's hymns: a hymn is praising God with song. To a hymn belong three things: praising God; joy of heart or thought; affectionate thinking of God's love. Song is a great gladness of thought about lasting things and endless glory, bursting out into the voice of praising. Well then is it called a book of hymns, for it teaches us to praise God with glad countenance and mirth, and softness in the soul; not only in the heart but with the voice praising and teaching those who are untaught.

The matter of this book is Christ and His Spouse, that is Holy Church, or every righteous man's soul. The intent is to conform men who are defiled in Adam to Christ in newness of life. The manner of teaching is thus: one time it speaks of Christ in His godhead, another time in His manhood, and another time so that it employs the voices of His servants. Also, it speaks of Holy Church in three manners, one while in the person of perfect men, sometimes of imperfect men, sometimes of evil men who are in Holy Church, in the body, not in spirit, in name, not in deed, in reckoning, not in merit.

In this work, I seek no strange English, but the lightest and commonest that is most like to the Latin, so that they who know no Latin, by the English may come to many Latin words. In the translation, I follow the letter as much as I can. And when I find no proper English, I follow the meaning of the word, so that they who read it to

> themselves need not dread erring. In expounding, I follow holy doctors, for it may come into the hand of some envious man, who will say that I wist not what I said, and so do harm to himself and others, if he despise the work that is profitable to himself and to others."

This whole Prologue, in its language and feeling, is characteristic of Rolle; of his whole-hearted devotion to Christ, of his burning love, of his "song" and mirth, of his praising and of his desire to teach. The closing lines seem quite clearly to imply, that he is translating, " for luf of the lewed manne," as Robert of Brunne once said, the *Commentary,* which originally he composed in Latin with the help of previous writers,—the " holy doctors ";—which would mean that this Commentary is the English form of his *Expositio Psalterii.* But, the English Commentary often agrees also with a Middle English *Metrical Psalter,* which exists in three MSS., written in the Yorkshire dialect. The best of the three, (MS. Vesp. D. VII.) appears to belong to Rolle's part of Yorkshire, and has been tentatively attributed to him. In this one, the names of no less than four different " owners " appear. One observed in writing: " I conceive this Psalter to be wrote in the thirteenth century ": and, forgetting perhaps that Rolle lived in the fourteenth, he suggested him as its author.

Dr. Horstman rather inclined to the opinion that this *Metrical Psalter* was one of Rolle's earlier literary attempts, which, later on, he drew on often for the translation which he needed for his English Commentary.

It has been noticed that Rolle, who after all was not a priest, claims to write on the authority of " holy doctors," not on his own. Who were these?

In his *Western Mysticism,* Dom Cuthbert Butler selected from S. Augustine's writings the chief passages which could be considered mystical. Of those he mentioned, he specially stressed his *Enarratio in*

Psalmum XLI., giving it, in a somewhat shortened form, from the translation in *The Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, published at Oxford in 1847, under the editorship of the Rev. Charles Marriott. Having quoted it, the Abbot of Downside wrote :—

> "This surely will, I think, be acknowledged by even the most objective exegete to be a noble piece of exegesis—a masterpiece of its kind. For however little it may express the real thought of the Psalmist, still without doing violence to the text, it makes his words, with rare skill, serve as the basis of a statement of mystical doctrine, forestalling the lines laid down by the great mystics of later times."[3]

In the light of these closing words, it seems worth while to inquire whether S. Augustine was not the chief of the "holy doctors" on whose exegesis Rolle relied. The translation of the *Enarrationes* published at Oxford is still accessible.

It is clearly impossible to deal here with the whole Psalter and with Rolle's entire Commentary. It must suffice to select some of those Psalms or parts of Psalms which by common consent can be interpreted mystically. A study of the *Commentary*, the *Metrical Psalter* and S. Augustine's *Enarrationes* should, by the way, throw not a little light upon Rolle and his teaching: it will also, and even at the outset, prove that the Hermit did not always follow S. Augustine; numerous touches are quite obviously his own. The Psalms to be dealt with here are numbered according to the Vulgate, to which, of course, both S. Augustine and Rolle refer. The XLI. Psalm, though it is not the earliest which contains mystical meaning, is, through its whole length, the most consistently patient of such interpretation: therefore, it may well come first here. At once, Rolle parts company with S. Augustine. Part

[3] Op. cit., pp. 29 et seq.

of the Vulgate " heading " of the well known *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus* (As the hart desireth) is *Intellectus filiis Core.* (Understanding for the sons of Core.) S. Augustine seizes on this, and though he admits that it may have a literal meaning, he draws out a subtle mystical sense which one might suppose would have attracted Rolle :—

> " Now Korah may have been, as indeed he was, a certain definite person : and have had sons, who might be called the sons of Korah : let us, however, search for the secret of which this is the sacrament, that this name may bring to light the mystery with which it is pregnant. For there is some great mystery in the matter that the name of *Sons of Korah* is given to Christians. Why ' sons of Korah ' ? They are *sons of the bridegroom, sons of Christ.* Because Korah is equivalent to *' Calvaria.'* Why, does it not at once occur to you that He was crucified on Calvary? Unquestionably it does. Therefore, *the sons of the bridegroom,* the sons of His Passion, the sons redeemed by His blood, the sons of His cross, who bear on their forehead that which His enemies erected on Calvary, are called *the sons of Korah:* to them is this Psalm sung as a Psalm for understanding."[4]

It is rather strange that Rolle should have passed by this exegesis. Having thus expounded the " heading," S. Augustine continues :—

> "Come, my brethren, catch my eagerness : share with me in this my longing : let us both love, let us both be inflamed with this thirst, let us both hasten to the well of understanding."

An echo of this is surely heard in Rolle's first expository words :—

> " This psalm is of all perfect men, that are

[4] Library of the Fathers, *S. Augustine,* Vol. II., p. 179.

burning with the flame of God's love, and pass into contemplative life."[5]

In expression, it is his own. When he expounds the first verse of this psalm he agrees closely with S. Augustine. He first translates the verse—"As the hart yearns to the well of waters";[6] and then he expounds thus:—

> "Therefore says he, as the hart that has eaten the adder greatly yearns to come to the wells of waters, for to drink and wax young again, so (being) destroyed in me vices and uncleanness, my soul desires with burning yearning to come to Thee, God."

In a footnote to the translation from the Worcester Cathedral MS., printed in *Laudate* for March, 1923, it was suggested that the legend of the hart eating snakes was mediæval. But it is much older. Rolle, like other men of the Middle Ages, would find it in S. Augustine, who wrote as follows:—

> "Perhaps Scripture meant us to consider in the stag not this point only, but another also. Hear what else there is in the hart.[7] It destroys serpents, it is inflamed with thirst yet more violent; having destroyed serpents, it runs to *the waterbrooks,* with thirst more keen than before. The serpents are thy vices, destroy the serpents of iniquity: then wilt thou long yet more for *the Fountain of Truth.* Perhaps avarice whispers in thine ear some dark counsel, hisses against the word of God, hisses against the commandment of God. And since it is said to thee 'Disregard this or that thing,' if thou prefer working iniquity to despising some temporal good, thou choosest to be

[5] *Rolle's Commentary on the Psalter,* p. 153.

[6] The Metrical Psalter thus renders this verse:—

> "As yearns the hart at wells of waters to be,
> So yearns my Soul, God, to Thee."

[7] He had already said that the hart is an emblem of swiftness, to teach the soul to have no sloth in its running.

> bitten by a serpent, rather than destroy it. Whilst therefore thou art yet indulgent to thy vice, thy covetousness or thy appetite, where am I to find in thee a longing such as this, that might make thee run to the water-brooks? When art thou to desire the fountain of Wisdom, whilst thou art yet labouring in the venom of iniquity?"[8]

It will be noticed that, in his short exposition, Rolle seizes on S. Augustine's two main points: the legend that harts incur thirst by killing serpents, and that, spiritually, the serpents signify "vices and uncleanness." For some reason, he passes by Augustine's entertaining statement that when harts run in herds, or swim, "they support the burdens of their heads on each other," and his consequential, ingenious question, "Are not they a kind of *harts,* that the Apostle addresses, saying, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*"?

In the second verse of the psalm, the two expositions agree closely. S. Augustine wrote:—

> "*My soul is athirst for the living God.* . . . . For what is it athirst? . . . This it is for which I am athirst to 'come and appear before Him.'
>
> I am athirst in my pilgrimage, in my running; I shall be filled on my arrival."

Rolle's exposition is very short, but obviously it is taken from this:—

> "Me thirsts in my yearning. I shall be filled in my coming."

In the next verse, Rolle greatly shortened S. Augustine's explanation, writing:—

> "Every man, that thing he maketh his god that he most loveth. For they can show their god with the finger, and *my* God may not be seen, that suffereth me to be in pain, and them in wealth. Therefore, make they their scorning, as if I had not God, or that He would not help me."

But S. Augustine had drawn out the contrast

[8] Library of the Fathers, *S. Augustine,* Vol. II., pp. 180—181.

between the Pagan and the Christian far more elaborately, though the fundamental ideas are the same :—

> "*And they daily say unto me, Where is thy God?* For if a Pagan should say this to me, I cannot retort it upon him, saying 'Where is thine?' inasmuch as he points with his finger to some stone, and says, 'Lo! there is my God!' When I have laughed at the stone, and he who pointed to it has been put to the blush, he raises his eyes from the stone, looks up to heaven, and perhaps says, pointing to the sun, 'Behold, there my God! Where, I pray, is your God?' He has found something to point out to the eyes of the flesh; whereas I on my part not that I have not a God to show him, cannot show him what he has no eyes to see. For he indeed would point out to my bodily eyes his God, the Sun; but what eyes hath he to which I might point out the Creator of the Sun?"

S. Augustine's whole Commentary on Psalm XLI. is much longer than Rolle's, a matter of twenty pages compared with just over three. This is the case more or less with all the psalms, his Commentary filling six volumes, while Rolle's is compressed into one.

In expounding the next verses, S. Augustine begins on a philosophical note, recalling the well known passage, on his search for God, in the tenth book of *The Confessions*. On these verses he says :—

> "If my soul were not *to pour itself out above itself* . . . . it would not see anything beyond itself; and in seeing itself, would not, for all that, see God. Let then my insulting enemies now say, '*Where is thy God?*' . . . I seek my God in every corporeal nature, terrestrial or celestial, and find Him not. I seek His substance in my own soul, and find it not . . . and wishing to see the invisible things of my God, . . . I have poured forth my soul above myself, and there remains no longer any

being for me to attain to, save my God. For it is *there* in the 'house of my God.' His dwelling place is above my soul. . . .

He Who has His house very high in secret place hath even on earth a tabernacle. His tabernacle on earth is the Church,—which is yet on her pilgrimage."

Further on, with a reference to Psalm LXXII. 15, 16 (Vulg.), he explains :—

"It is there, in the sanctuary of God, in the house of God, is the fountain of *understanding.* There he *understood of the last things,* and solved the question concerning the prosperity of the unrighteous, and the sufferings of the righteous. How does he solve it? Why, that the wicked, when reprieved here, are reserved for punishments without end: and the good when they suffer here, are being tried in order that they may in the end obtain the inheritance."

Then, he turns to the reality of "the wonderful tabernacle of the House of God," as the Psalmist describes it—*In voce exultationis et confessionis: sonus epulantis:*—

"The song of them that triumph,
The shout of them that feast."

He comments thus :—

"In the 'House of God,' there is a never-ending festival: for there it is not an occasion celebrated once, and then to pass away. The angelic choir makes an eternal 'holyday': the presence of God's face, the joy that never fails. This is a 'holyday' of such a kind, as neither to be opened by any dawn, nor terminated by any evening. From that everlasting perpetual festivity, a certain sweet and melodious strain strikes on the ears of the heart, provided only the world do not drown the sounds. As he walks in this tabernacle, and contemplates God's wonderful works for the redemption of the faithful, the sound of that

festivity charms his ears, and bears the *hart* away to *the water-brooks.*"

These three passages, extracted from almost four pages of commentary contain S. Augustine's main points. Rolle, with the translations, compresses all he has to say into these few lines :—

> "*There I have remembered, and I held my soul in me; for why, I shall pass into (the) place of (a) wonderful tabernacle, into the house of God.*
>
> *There I remembered;* that is reproofs and contempts. I think that they shall be meed-ful, and therefore I held my soul in me. That is, I enlarged it to love of God and my enemy. I let it not rake in idle thoughts : for on this manner, I shall pass throughout Holy Church. There are wonderful lovers, in-coming, with thought, in to God's house in heaven, seized with no yearning for this world. How camest thou to the privity of this house?
>
> *In voice of joying and of shrift: sound of eating.*
>
> Of the feast of heaven sounds in his heart a sweet note that makes him last[9] in voice of joying, for the wonderful softness of mirth and song in his soul : and 'of shrift,' that is, of endless praising. And 'of sound of eating,' that is, joying of spiritual dainties : for he is taken in to the melody of angels praising, that is, in his thought, as the master says in the gloss."

It seems obvious that Rolle here incorporates S. Augustine's reference to Psalm LXXII., though he gives it a practical turn, in insisting that he must "love his enemy"; he borrows S. Augustine's identification of the "wonderful tabernacle" and the Church.

Rolle's closing phrase seems to refer directly, though briefly, to S. Augustine's description of the angelic joy striking on the ears of the heart : what else can he mean by "that is in his thought"? Yet two characteristic touches must be Rolle's own : the refusal to

[9] One MS. reads "burst out into."

"rake in idle thoughts" and his description of the angelic melody, which no one can fail to relate to the beautiful passage describing his own experience "in the Chapel," when "the heavenly gate" was first opened to him. It will recall, too, that passage in the *Anehede,* if that be his, where he writes on Angels' song.

It is, too, in consonance with his persistent desire to help all and sundry in the way that "common people" can understand, that he left on one side the opening philosophical exposition, which came so naturally to S. Augustine, who, compared to this mainly self-taught Englishman, was certainly an "academic person."

Rolle's handling of the eighth verse is tinged by S. Augustine's. The latter wrote:—

> "*My soul is disquieted on account of myself.* Is it disquieted on account of God? It is on my own account it is disquieted. By the Unchangeable it was revived: it is by the changeable it is disquieted. I know that the righteousness of God remaineth: whether my will will remain steadfast I know not. . . . Wouldest thou have it not disquieted? Let it not rest on thine own self, and say, *Unto Thee, O Lord, have I lift up my soul.* Hear the meaning of this more plainly. Found not thy hopes on thyself, thy soul is disquieted on account of thyself for it has not yet found anything that should make it secure about thee."

Making allowance for the contrast between S. Augustine's profound self-distrust and Rolle's happier, simpler confidence, the latter's rendering, shortened and de-philosophised is substantially the same:—

> "'To myself,': that is, I set it to mine own slowness, that my soul is stirred or sorry: for turning me to God I am gladded. Were it not for our body's vices, our soul would aye be in rest and delight; therefore, that is, because of the hinder-

> ings of my soul, I shall be mindful of Thee: that is, I haste me to Thee with all my heart, for Thou dost away all ill."

Quite unmistakably, he follows S. Augustine in his exposition of *de terra Jordanis et Hermoniim a monte modico.* The latter wrote:—

> "From whence did I remember Thee? From the *little* hill, and from *the land of Jordan.* Perhaps from Baptism when the remission of sins is given . . . observe, not *of the great hill,* that thou mayest make of the *little hill* a great one: for whoso exalteth himself shall be abased. . . . . If you would also ask the meaning of the names, Jordan means 'their descent.' Descend then that thou mayest be lifted up; be not lifted up lest thou be cast down. *And the little hill of Hermon.* Hermon means 'anathematizing.' Anathematize thyself, by being displeased with thyself, for if thou art pleased with thyself, God will be displeased with thee."

Rolle no doubt had this in mind, and, as usual, added a touch or two of his own:—

> "My mind shall be from the land of Jordan, that is, from my Baptism: or from Penance when thou forgavest me my sin, and meeked me: and made me, earth, to bear fruit. He that thinks of this is not disturbed by angers. And I shall be mindful of Thee from Hermon, the little hill. That is, for Thou hast made me to mis-pay[10] myself, and forsake the devil, and be high in virtues and be low in meekness. Jordan is as much as to say down-lighting[11] and Hermon as cursing."

This exegesis seems rather to gain than lose in passing from Augustine's stately gravity to Rolle's direct and vivid simplicity. In the case of *Abyssus abyssum invocat,* Rolle altogether passes by S. Augustine's first exposition, which shortened, is as follows:—

[10] Displease. [11] Descending.

> "What then is the *abyss* that calls, and to what does it call? If by 'abyss' we understand great depth, is not man's heart . . . *an abyss?* For what is there more profound than that 'abyss'? Men may speak, may be seen by the operation of their members, may be heard speaking in conversation; but whose thought is penetrated, whose heart is seen into? What is he inwardly engaged on, what is he inwardly capable of, what is he inwardly doing, or what purposing, what is he inwardly wishing to happen or not to happen, who shall comprehend? . . . *Deep calls on deep,* then, is 'man calls to man.' Thus is it wisdom is learnt, and thus faith when *man calls to man.* . . Every man, then, though holy, though righteous, though advancing in many things is still a 'deep'; and he is calling on a 'deep,' when he is announcing any point of faith, any point of the truth, for the sake of eternal life. But it is then that the 'deep' is useful to the *deep* called upon, when it is done *with the Voice of Thy water-spouts.* Deep calls to deep: man wins his fellow-man, but not with his own voice, but *with the Voice of Thy water-spouts.*"

This interpretation is, of course, markedly and intimately Augustinian, recalling those passages in the tenth book of *The Confessions,* where the Saint's psychology is so penetrating and piercing that modern philosophers might still learn from it, Such is the following interrogative admission, when this inscrutability of the human self weighs on Augustine's spirit:—

> "And from Thee, O Lord, *unto Whose eyes* the abyss of man's conscience is naked, what could be hidden in me though I would not confess it?"

Or again, there is this passage, probing now past mere unwillingness, right down into a man's sheer incapacity to plumb his own secrets:—

> "For Thou, O Lord, dost judge me: because

> although *no man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him,* yet there is something of man which neither *the spirit of man which is in him knoweth.* But Thou, Lord, knowest all of him, Who hast made him."

Rolle, with perhaps the exception of one phrase, omits all this. He was essentially practical—not in the Materialist's way, however—and not philosophical. He was sensitive and responsive to events and happenings of all sorts, but he had certainly no craving for what the Germans call *systematik.* Like the typical Englishman, and that a northerner, which he was, he was less concerned with the causes of things than with their prompt handling: and also, like so many of his countrymen, he seemed sometimes hardly to realise how much success in handling effects depends on knowledge of their causes. He was anxious always to deal with the present and provide for the future, forgetting perhaps how deeply their roots were plunged in the past, or in the unapparent side of that present. So, this verse suggests to him the "Last Things," not the enigmatic psychology of the human self:—

> "Deepness incalls deepness: *in Voice of Thy gutters.* I am hindered and dreary on account of deepness, that is, the doom that Thou punishedst Adam with: wherefore we are in travail and die. *Incalls deepness:* that is, shows another doom, in the which ill men shall be damned. For if He punished Adam so hard for one sin, what hopest thou that He shall do to those who will no penance do for their sins, but choose rather to die therein than they will leave it. Therefore, these two dooms disturb a righteous man. And that, 'in Voice of Thy gutters,' That is, through the lore of Thy lovers that show them to men."

Possibly, this exposition was inspired by Rolle's ever-present sense of the sinfulness actually round about him. The rough ways of Pickering Forest were as great a contrast as could be to the civilised and

learned, if far from holy, surroundings of S. Augustine. Possibly Rolle's insistence on obvious consequences was more effective with people, like "this same John," who would have a fur collar on his coat even if he had to steal for it, and with all the rest of those entertaining but reprehensible sinners round about him, than any dissertations about the inscrutability of human nature could be.

On the other hand, it may have been a rendering, considerably altered, of S. Augustine's second explanation, with Adam introduced, as a familiar figure to drive the lesson in:—

> "Hear another interpretation. I, who tremble all over, when my soul was disquieted on account of myself, feared greatly on account of Thy *judgments* . . . . for Thou hast said to the sinner, *Thou shalt surely die*. . . . This is the first deep of Thy judgments. But if men have lived ill here, *deep calleth unto deep,* in that they pass from punishment to punishment, and from darkness to darkness, and from *deep to deep,* and from suffering to suffering, and from the fires of passion to the flames of hell, It was this, then, perhaps that this man feared when he said, *My soul is disquieted on account of myself*. . . . . Are those judgments slight ones? They are great ones, severe, hard to bear, but would they were all. . . . *Whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit?*—seeing that deep calls to deep, and after those sufferings severer ones are to be dreaded."

There is nothing in this parallel to Rolle's riddling phrase "the lore of Thy lovers that show them to men"; but, as already suggested, that may be an echo of the words in S. Augustine's first exposition, "man wins his fellow-man, but not with his own voice." In the *Metrical Psalter,* the couplet runs:—

> "Deepness incalls deepness high,
> In the voice of Thy tokens sly,"[12]

[12] Clever.

where the writer, whether Rolle or another, would seem to have given more heed to his rime, than to his original,—*in voce cataractarum tuarum.*

The claim has been made that all the Psalms admit of a mystical interpretation. Some, however, do so more obviously than others, and in them some verses rather than others: such are Pss. xxvi. 5; xxxv. 9, 10; xli.; lxvii. 29; lxxii. 23, 24; lxxv. 4; lxxxviii. 20; ciii. 17; cxviii. 32; cxx. 1.

Expounding Psalm xxvi. 5, *Quoniam abscondit me in Tabernaculo suo,* Rolle wrote:—

> "*For He hid me in His Tabernacle,* that is, in Holy Church, and in the memory of His Passion, from mine enemies, in the day of ills: that is, in this life, where ill men flourish in ease and joy, and good men are in penance and tribulation: and He covered me from hurting in the hiding-place of His Tabernacle, that is, in the privity of His Godhead, where a righteous man's will aye is."

S. Augustine gives two separate exegeses of this Psalm.[13] Concerning this verse, his first is very short:—

> "He hath hidden me in the dispensation of His Incarnate Word in the time of temptations, to which my mortal life is exposed. . . . He hath protected me with the heart believing unto righteousness."

His second is rather less obscure:—

> "Lo! the day of our evils in this life. Days of evil the ungodly have in one way, the faithful in another. . . . What is the secret of His Tabernacle? . . . For there are, so to say, many members of a Tabernacle seen from without. There is, too, so to say, the shrine, which is called the secret sanctuary, the innermost part of the temple. And what is this? That which the priest alone entered. And haply the Priest Himself is the secret of God's Tabernacle. For He received flesh

[13] Op. cit., Vol. I., pp. 188—209.

> from this Tabernacle, and made for us the secret of the Tabernacle: so that His other members, believers on Him, should be His Tabernacle, but Himself the secret of the Tabernacle."

Rolle seems to have been influenced by this. S. Augustine's reference to the diverse lots of the wicked and the faithful is, however, far the more subtle and suggestive: Rolle's seems to be chiefly inspired by his rather irritable scorn for the well-off. But for this, he is the more mystical of the two: he passes quickly from interpreting the "Tabernacle" into Holy Church, which is obvious, to the other image, " the privity of the Godhead where the righteous man's will aye is," that is, to true contemplation.

S. Augustine instead works it out more on theological lines, according to the meaning given in his first exposition that the " Tabernacle " is the Word Incarnate.

But, the case is reversed in verse 4.—*One thing have I required of the Lord . . . that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* Rolle gives this no specially mystical turn: nor does S. Augustine *in loco.* But, later on, when he is dealing with Psalm lxxxv. 5, he suddenly breaks into language as ardent as any of Rolle's :—

> " See how he calls on God in another Psalm: *One thing have I required of the Lord, this will I ask.* What is it which he required? *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* For what reason? That I may behold the delightfulness of the Lord. If then thou wouldest be a lover of God, with thy innermost marrow and with pure sighings love Him, desire Him, for Him burn, long for Him, than Whom thou shalt find nothing more pleasant, nothing better, nothing more joyful, nothing more lasting."[14]

Dealing with Psalm xxxv. 9, 10 :—*They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house: and Thou*

[14] Op. cit., Vol. IV., p. 193.

shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure. For with Thee is the fountain of life: and in Thy light we shall see light—there is a mystical touch in Rolle's commentary :—

> " In this world, God's lovers are drunken in the wonderful sweetness of contemplation, and greatly delighted in the ardent access of Christ's love."

S. Augustine makes no reference to contemplation here.

There are four Psalms, lx—lxiii., which may be studied with special profit as throwing light on Rolle's troubled youth, turning, as it did after many struggles, into the settled peace and joy of his later years. Very beautiful in themselves,—psalms which, through the long generations of man's chequered pilgrimage, must, with their combined pain and insight, have brought a consciousness of sympathy, consolation and understanding to countless faithful souls, caught in this world's hidden snares,—they appear to be, to a rather intense degree, applicable to Rolle.

The sixtieth, *Exaudi, Deus*, is obviously the hymn of a man who has known sore trouble, but, having been rescued from it, is at peace. Here Rolle leaves S. Augustine's exegesis out of the reckoning, and treats the Psalm from his personal standpoint. His actual rendering of the first verse is :—

> " From ends of the earth to Thee I cried, whilst my heart was angered : on a stone Thou didst raise me."

S. Augustine treats this as the cry of the world-wide Church. Not so Rolle :—

> " *From ends of the earth:* that is, from the time I set an ending in my thoughts of earthly love."

While, to S. Augustine, the rock is Christ, to Rolle the

> " Stone . . . . is stableness of truth : Thou didst raise me from the law of vices and covetousness."

In the fourth verse, he again strikes a personal note. To S. Augustine the "sojourner" is the Church. But Rolle's thoughts turn back to those early days of desperate struggle for freedom from an entangling world :—

> "*I shall dwell in Thy Tabernacle;* that is, I shall serve Thee to the end of my life; and I shall be covered from the heat of vices, in the covering of Thy wings, that is, in the covering of Thy mercy and Thy might that weighs not, and turns away hurting."

To the seventh verse, Rolle gives a turn, not suggested by Augustine, which relates the Psalmist's promise to the final Vision of God's lovers :—

> "This king dwells without end, and His lovers with Him; *In sight of God,* that is, full joy and perfect to see God."

Then, he expounds the last half of the verse conformably :—

> "In endless life who shall seek His mercy and sooth fastness? None. For their blissfulness shall be sufficient to them, that none seeks mercy because there is no wrath! none seeks soothfastness, because all see God."

For the first verse of the next Psalm (lxi.) however, Rolle has obviously gone to S. Augustine for help. *Nonne Deo subjecta erit anima mea?*[15]—the Psalmist asked. The exegesis of both is unintelligible without the "heading" of the Psalm which is given in the Vulgate :—*Pro Idithun. Psalmus David.* S. Augustine wrote :—

> "According to the interpretation of the Hebrew tongue, as to us it hath come in Latin, Idithun is translated *leaping over them.* Therefore, he that is singing doth leap over certain men, on whom from above he looketh down. Let us see how far he hath leaped over, and whom he hath leaped over, and in what place, though he hath leaped

[15] "Shall not my soul be subject to God?"

over certain men, he is situate, whence as from a kind of spiritual and secure position he may behold what is below, (not so looking back as that he fall, but so that he that hath leaped over may stir up the indolent to follow), and may extol the place, at which by leaping over he hath arrived. For this man that leapeth over is above something in such sort as that he is under someone: whence first to us he hath desired to intimate the Person under Whom he is protected, in order that his having passed over, may not be for pride but for advancement.

He being set, I say, in a certain fortified place, doth say (v. 1): *Shall not my soul be subject to God?* For he hath heard, *He that doth exalt himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted:*[16] and fearful lest by leaping over he should be proud, not elated by those things that were below, but humble because of Him that was above: to envious men, as it were threatening to him a fall, who were grieved that he had leaped over, he hath made answer, *Shall not my soul be subject to God?* Why is it that for me, as it were leaping over ye seek for snares?—either by assaulting, ye would throw me down, or by leading astray ye would deceive me. Do I so remember what I am above, as that I am forgetful, Whom I am below? *Shall not my soul be subject to God?* However much I may draw near, howsoever much I may ascend, howsoever much I leap over, under God I shall be, not against God. Safely, therefore, I mount above all other things, when He that is above all things, doth hold me under Him. . . . Because Himself is God, my Saving One, my Taker up."[17]

Abbot Butler, in *Western Mysticism* hinted that

[16] S. Matt. xxiii. 12.

[17] Library of the Fathers: *S. Augustine,* Vol. III., pp. 184—186.

S. Augustine's exegesis does not always express "the real thought of the Psalmist." Whether or no that is the case here, this passage throws a light not always perceived by those who read or sing this Psalm. Rolle is brief as usual, but unusually obscure. He says nothing whatever about the heading. This is the whole passage :—

> "*Nonne deo subjecta erit anima mea: ab ipso enim salutare meum. Shall not my soul be subject to God: for why, from Him is my healing.*
>
> The holy man overleaping in (the) thought of heaven all the world's lovers; and seeing many lettings[18] against him: to envious men lower than he, and willing to deceive him, he answers, 'Shall not to God—though He do stir me and I overleap many things—my soul be subject?' To God, coveting nothing but Him: as who (would) say so shall it be, for, from Him, that is, the Father, is my healing. That is, Jesus His Son is Maker of my health."

To readers of S. Augustine's exegesis, Rolle's meaning is plain enough. But it seems impossible that without any reference to "Idithun"—he never gives these headings—this whole train of ideas, so compressed too as he rendered them, could have conveyed anything whatever to his contemporaries. Perhaps it was all so plain to him, and, moreover, so full of bitter and blissful meaning, that, as we are all wont to do with what is transparently obvious to ourselves, he forgot that they possessed neither of his keys, viz., S. Augustine's commentary, or his own life-experience and self. In thought, as he read Augustine, he reverted to those unblessed people of the *Melum*, "envious men"; he remembered their "back-biting," their scorn, their eagerness to trip him up. But he had "leapt over." And now, when the immediate bitterness had faded in the growing peace of God's aid, he perceived that his leap had been to no vantage place

[18] Hindrances.

of insolent carelessness, but to a covered hold, under those wings "that weigh not." His soul had in fact, "escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler"; and there he rested, "subject to God."

So out of an apparent enigma, only to be solved by going to S. Augustine, we can extract a poignant secret of Rolle's naturally tempestuous, spiritually soothed heart. If we turn back for a moment to Psalm xxxix. *Expectans expectavi,* we shall find that there, too, and this time with the utmost directness and simplicity, he expounds the first three verses with reference to his own great escape:—

> "*Abiding the Lord I abode: and He beheld to me.* Abiding I abode with desire and suffering our Lord Jesus Christ, that might save me; and He turned not from me His grace, but He beheld to me, that is, to my profit and to my healing.
>
> *And He heard my prayers; and He led me out of the lake of wretchedness; and out of the fen clay.* In that He heard my prayers, that He led me out of the lake of wretchedness, that is from the deepness of fleshly yearnings and of vile covetousness, and *out of the fen clay,* that is, out of ill works that hold the feet of our wills and defile them.
>
> *And He set above the stone my feet, and He righted my gaits. And He set,* that I may go securely in love. *On the stone,* that is Christ, in stableness of truth and charity. *My feet,* that is, my wits. *And so He righted,* that I looked not to the world again. *My gaits,* that is, my works, that they erred not from His will."

Psalm lxii, is, as Rolle says, a cry "of righteous men heated in the anguish of this life." Commenting on verse 2, he says:—

> "My soul covets nought but Thee; my soul thirsted for many reasons, but 'how manifold' my flesh, that is, for the manifold defaults it suffers."

The world he lived in, and those he lived among, must have been looking very unattractive to him, when he expounded the third verse :—

> "Here ought us to thirst, in this world that is called land of wilderness; for it is without the dwelling of holy men; and without the way leading to Heaven, and without water of grace; this is an ill desert and an horrible. But God has made here a way for His lovers, and sent them water from His clay."

Explaining the eighth verse, Rolle hit on a lovely phrase: "I am Thy bird, and if Thou coverest me not, the glede will ravish me away." No doubt he remembered S. Augustine's—"If Thou protect me not, forasmuch as I am a chicken, the kite will seize me." But though S. Augustine is quite true to the facts of Rolle's country, where often enough a wind-hover waits and waits, exquisitely balanced, above some farm's out-buildings, to snatch the chicks if they wander too far from their mother hen, yet Rolle's words much more picturesquely recall the poise of a wind-hover watching.

In the puzzling tenth verse about the foxes, S. Augustine boldly turns them into the "Kings of the earth," on the ground that the Jews

> "rejecting Christ said, *We have no King but Cæsar*. They rejected a Lamb, chose a fox: deservedly portions of foxes they were made."

Rolle did not follow him. Once more, his thoughts were with those former troubles :—

> "They of this world, that savour nought but earth, in vain sought my soul to slay, for I passed from them into the love of Heaven. But they shall enter into the lower pain of hell. And they shall be given into the hand of the sword; that is, into the power of God's vengeance. And they shall be portions for foxes, that is, of the fiends who deceive deceiving and wicked men."

The sixty-third Psalm might seem to lend itself

specially to recollection of Rolle's youthful troubles. But following S. Augustine's lead here, he expounds the first four verses with reference only to our Lord's Passion. The Saint delivered this discourse on the day when the Church was "keeping the Festival of the Holy Martyrs' Passion," and so naturally, in expounding this Psalm, he takes the wicked men for the Jews, and the righteous man for the Martyrs' King. Vigorously and vividly, Rolle set their crime forth, in his comment on verses three and four :—

> "They sharped as a sword their tongues, openly crying for His death, with the which (tongues) they slew Christ. They bent their bow, that is, treasons; that was a bitter thing, though their words were sweet, so that they shot from their hiding-places, at the undefiled as they wended. Therefore, they cannot be excused. Suddenly, as no man weened or wist what they thought, they did their felony, and were not adread there for. Hard hearts they had; and they could find it in their hearts to slay Him Whom they saw raise dead men. But they persisted with wicked words, out of malice crying for His death, to their own damnation."

In the difficult seventh verse, *Accedet homo ad cor altum: et exaltabitur deus,* Rolle does not follow S. Augustine, who renders it "Thou shalt draw near a Man and a deep heart," explaining it with reference to the coming of our Lord to the City to suffer. Rolle, once again, depends on an exposition, more or less mystical, and apparently his own :—

> "*Man shall come to a high heart: and God shall be set on high.* He that ransacks wickedness fails; but a man, ransacking good, shall come to a high heart, that is, to high understanding in the things of God. And there he fails not. But God shall be set on high in his heart; though God in Himself waxes not."

Apart from whole Psalms like these, there are, as

already pointed out, isolated verses which have suggested mystical interpretations. Such are verses 24 and 25 of Psalm lxxii., though S. Augustine in interpreting them passes by that side, and explains that the Psalmist

> "compared with his earthly will the heavenly reward which he is to receive: . . . Thou reservest, he saith, for me in Heaven, riches immortal, even Thyself, and I have willed from Thee on earth that which even ungodly men have, money, gold, silver, jewels, households, which even many wicked men have: which even many profligate women have, many profligate men: these things as a great matter I have desired of my God upon earth: though my God reserved Himself for me in Heaven! *For what have I in Heaven?* He hath to display that very what."

Rolle, though his language is less emphatic, perhaps because his youth had differed from S. Augustine's, obviously is following him:—

> "That is how wonderful joy is kept to me to have in heaven, and how vile is that I willed on this earth, in vanity that separated me from Thee. But now, I will not have aught but Thee. Thee I love, Thee I desire, Thee I covet, Thee I preach."

At the close of *The Form of Perfect Living*, describing the reward of God's lovers, Rolle has a lovely echo of that phrase:—

> "They . . . see Him face to face, and eye to eye, and dwell with Him without end. For Him they sought, and Him they coveted, and Him they loved, with all their might."

In some of the Psalms there are passages, which can bear a mystical meaning, but which sound a less personal, more universal note. There is, e.g., Ps. lxxv. 5:— *Illuminans tu mirabiliter a montibus aeternis.* The very words, and all the recollections of the inspiration of mountains, all the memories they call up, seem to demand such an interpretation. No verse in the

Psalms perhaps has been actually translated more variously than this one. Coverdale's rendering is, "Thou art of more honour and might: than the hills of the robbers." The Authorised Version's reading is, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey"; from which the Revised Version does not differ materially.

Dr. Cheyne offered two versions. In his two volume edition of *The Book of Psalms,* published in 1904, in place of the 1888 edition, he translated this verse thus:—

> "O Yahwè! fearful art thou,
> (And) venerable is the place of thy glory."

In a pocket edition of a "new translation" of the Psalms, published in 1905, he offered yet another version:—

> "Fearful art thou; more glorious than the Everlasting mountains."

S. Augustine and Rolle, of course used, as always, the Vulgate text, the version familiar to the larger part of Western Christendom. Rolle simply follows Augustine in declaring that the light coming "from the endless hills," is "from apostles and holy men who first take the beams of the very light." He makes no mention, though S. Augustine does, of Psalm cxx. (I have lifted up mine eyes unto the hills); and he leaves on one side Augustine's curious interpretation,— "parties made from the mountains . . . a Donatus or a Maximianus." Nor does he insist, like S. Augustine, that the light is originally from God:—

> "Admirably, with force, hath been said *Thou:* that no one may suppose that the mountains enlighten him. . . O man, there hath come to thee light through the mountains: but God doth enlighten them, not the mountains. *Thou enlightening,* he saith, *Thou,* not the mountains."

Moreover, in interpreting Psalm cxx., S. Augustine repeated this warning:—

> "Let them now at length lift their eyes up to the hills, whence their help cometh. . . . But let them not again trust in the hills; for the hills themselves shine not of their own light, but of His, of Whom it is said, *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. . . . Thy help therefore is from Him, of Whose fulness the hills received; not from the hills; towards which nevertheless, save thou lift thine eyes through the Scriptures, thou wilt not approach so as to be lighted by Him."

Rolle follows S. Augustine, with great brevity:—

> "The hills are holy men, through whom Holy Writ is opened. And of their writing we have help. Therefore we lift our eyes to them. But we trust in God because (v. 2) 'My help (is) of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.'"

It is worth while to remember that in expounding Psalm lxiv. 14, *et valles abundabunt frumento*,[19] Rolle writes,—"dales, that is, meek folk." It will be noticed that in expounding this verse about the mountains, he omits S. Augustine's reminder that effort on man's part is essential to this enlightenment.

It is a curious fact that neither attaches a mystical meaning to Psalm lxxxviii. 20, which seems to invite one: Rolle writes rather the more vividly, but not as we might have expected:—"*Thou spakest in vision:* that is, in privy revelation to the prophets."

There remains Psalm lxvii. 29: *Ibi Benjamin adolescentulus, in mentis excessu* (there Benjamin a youth in ecstasy of mind), a version which Coverdale did not follow. This involves a literary loss as well as a mystical, for the Vulgate rendering suggested the titles of two of Richard of S.Victor's most mystical treatises, *Benjamin Major*, and *Benjamin Minor*.

Readers of the *Paradiso* will remember that S. Thomas Aquinas, pointing out to Dante the souls of

[19] "The vales shall abound with corn."

the great Doctors and Mystics, put together Isidore, Bede and Richard of S. Victor, adding :—

" Riccardo
che a considerar fu più che viro."[20]

S. Augustine, commenting upon " Benjamin adolescentulus," explained that he foreshadowed S. Paul " caught up to the third heaven " :—

> " A trance is the mind's going out : which thing sometimes chanceth through fear : but sometimes through some revelation, the mind suffering separation from the corporal senses, in order that that which is to be represented may be represented to the spirit."

Rolle intensifies the mystical meaning by connecting it with the phrase of the previous verse ; *de fontibus Israel:*—

> " Praises God, dwelling in Holy Church, drinking of the wells of Israel, that is, the lore of the Apostles. There, in the wells, is Benjamin, that is, son of the right hand, that is, a contemplative soul ; a young child : that is, in new life of charity, not old in sin : in out-passing of thought from himself into contemplation of God."

This seems to be drawn less from S. Augustine's explanation than from Rolle's own experience.

Occasionally, his humour has a very English savour, to which nothing in S. Augustine's Discourses corresponds. The latter, commenting on Psalm xix. 8—*Hi in curribus et hi in equis,* " Some in chariots and some on horses," etc., gives this dignified exposition :—

> " Some are drawn away by the ever-moving succession of temporal goods ; and some are preferred to proud honour, and in them exult."

Rolle says the same substantially, only bringing in his own quaint humour :—

> " The salvation of Christ's right hand is not short, but lasting for evermore. The salvation of

[20] *Paradiso* X., 131, 132 : " Richard who in contemplation was more than man."

> His left hand is earthly riches, in the which His lovers are not mighty, but the lovers of this world. And they are in carts, that is, they are drawn about with the wheels of covetousness; and in the pomp of this world is their joy. And they are on horses, that is, they will not go on the feet of meekness, but they are on high, and have their delight in honours proud and vain. Thus joy they: but we who dread to sit on proud horses, that will stumble and make us break our necks, shall seek the honour of God, and fasten our hope in heaven."

All these psalms and isolated verses, some of the best known of those which have acquired mystical meaning and associations, show that Rolle's main teacher among men was Augustine.

But, just as clearly, they suggest that in the business of exegesis as much as in the work of teaching ascetic morals, or relating mystical experience, Rolle, our first writer of consecutive, thought-out, well constructed, vernacular treatises, was a man of conspicuous originality and ability, and of intense spirituality.

It cannot be denied that he lived in an unphilosophical, unacademic environment, and that, before Europe, through the great Movement known as the Renaissance had not only recovered classical learning—for that process had begun when he lived—but had taken stock of her re-found treasures, and had set sturdily, if not always judiciously, to the long work of reconstruction. In his time and place and circumstances he was perhaps, all things being considered, not less remarkable than S. Teresa and S. John of the Cross, in theirs.

It may be interesting to conclude with the traces to be found, in Rolle's handling of the Psalter, of his love for natural beauty. To that end, a translation, as literal as possible, of Psalm ciii., in *The Metrical Psalter,* is serviceable:

" Bless, my soul, the Lord now!
The Lord my God: powerful and great art Thou.

Shrift[21] and beauty Thou hast put on right,
For clothing um-belapped[22] with light.

Stretching the heavens like a hide[23] with bliss
Who covers with waters its upper parts.

That sittest upon the uprising cloud,
That goest on the feathers of winds so loud.

That makest Thine angels spirits flying,
And Thy serving-men fire burning.

That grounded the land on His steadfastness,
That it should not swerve in the age of the ages.

Deepness, like a shroud, His covering is,
His waters shall stand above the hills.

From Thy snubbing shall they flee,
For the voice of Thy thunder afearèd be.

The hills rise up, the fields down go,
To the place which Thou didst ground for those.

Thou settest a limit they may not overpass,
Nor turn to cover the land withal.

Thou sendest out streams in many dales[24]
Between, among hills, shall their waters go.

Drink shall all beasts of the field so wide,
Wild asses shall in their thirst abide.[25]

[21] A literal rendering of *confessionem.*

[22] A favourite word of Rolle, meaning enveloped, wrapped all round, like the Latin original *Amictus lumine sicut vestimento.*

[23] *Sicut pellem:* the Commentary says "stretching like a skin."

[24] Vulg. *in convallibus;* Rolle naturally wrote of the "dales" of his North Riding, running, like Rye-dale, for instance, "betwixt the hills."

[25] This is not merely for rime's sake; but a rendering of the Lat. *expectabunt,* by the A.S. verb *abídan,* which, in Middle English could mean *await.*

Above them shall dwell fowls of heaven, [steven.[26]
From the midst of the stones they give their

From His heights above watering the hills
With the fruit of His works, the land He fills.

Forth-leading hay to many mares
And grass also for the service of men.

That Thou mayest lead out bread from the earth
That wine all red may gladden man's heart.

That he may cheer the body with the best oil
And bread shall make man's heart fast.

The field's trees shall be filled full, each one,
Also the Cedars of Lebanon,

Which He planted with His hand.
There shall the sparrows go nestling down.

The wild hawk's house is leader[27] of those.
To many harts the high hills,

And the stones, by day and night,
Are to the urchins,[28] a place of flight.

He made the moon for time so long,
The sun, he knoweth his down-gang.

Thou settest mirkness, and madest night good,
In it shall fare forth the beasts of the wood.

Lions' whelps roaring and ravishing so,
Seeking their meat from God, they go.

The sun has sprung up: summoned are they,
And in their dens shall be locked by day.

Out shall man go unto his work
And to his working till evening's mirk.

[26] Song.

[27] i.e., the topmost. The Vulgate's heron, Coverdale's stork, Rolle replaces by the English hawk; though in his Commentary it is the ger-falcon.

[28] Hedge-hogs.

How mighty, O Lord, are Thy many works,
In wisdom didst Thou make them all.

Every land filled full it is
Of Thy possessions, through Thy wisdom made

This great sea, with its room for hands[29]
Of whose worms there is no end.

Beasts, some smaller and some greater;
Over them there shall the ships fare.

This dragon whom Thou madest before
To play with him in derision sore.

All from Thee, there they abide,
For Thee to give their meat in due tide.

Thou giving to them, gather they shall,
Thou, opening Thine hand, withal,

Every one of them, more or less,
Filled full with Thy goodness.

Then soothly, turning Thy Face away
Their spirit shalt Thou reive away;

They shall be troubled, and they shall wane
And to their dust shall turn again.

Outsending Thy spirit, them shalt Thou re-make,
The face of earth renewed shalt Thou make.

May the bliss of the Lord in this world be,
Of His works may the Lord all fain be,

Who beholds the land and makes it quake,
Who touches the hills and at once they smoke.

Therefore in my life I shall sing to the Lord;
I shall psalm so long as I am to my God.

Winsome to Him may all my speech be,
In the Lord will I delight soothly.

May the sinful and wicked wane from this world,
Till they be nought: my soul
Bless the Lord."

[29] Giving space for hands to work in.

There are other Psalms wherein, in his translation or comments, Rolle's love of country escapes. Sometimes, as in Psalm viii., much of which is a noble song of natural beauty, Rolle turns the physical straight into an allegorical meaning. The moon and the stars become the Apostles, the oxen appear as "men travailing spiritually in Holy Church"; and, rather disappointingly, the "fowls of the heaven," such a pleasant part of the hills and moorlands, become without more ado, "proud men who will heighten their settles above all others." While the fish, for some unguessed reason, symbolise "covetous men," a character which seems to sort so ill with their apparently purposeless comings and goings. At other times, the scenery he knew so well gives an edge to his comments. Reading Psalm xxiii. 3, *Quis ascendet in montem Domini?*[30]—it is easy to believe that Rolle, standing after a stiff scramble on the moorland edge of one of the narrow dales of the North Riding, looking down from some ledge on the scattered farms with their cultivated holdings below, in the comfortable, sheltered, well-watered strip of prosperity, may have let his reflections colour his Commentary:—

> "Who is set here because of scarcity: for full few are there that stands in the hill of righteousness, or climbs thereto: and many climb that stand not because they lust not, falling down again to the dale of sins where they came from."

In Psalm lxxi., he uses the north country "howe"—often given as part of their name to the higher points of these hills,—to signify the "perfectest men," while the mere hills represent "meaner men in holiness." On Psalm lxxxiii. 4, which has consoled so many weary moments, *Etenim passer invenit sibi domum*, etc., Rolle wrote:—

> "The sparrow, that is, a meek will, flying from earthly love, found house for himself, that is (a) dwelling in heaven, and has great joy when he

[30] "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?"

knows that his settle is ordained there, and the turtle, that is the chaste flesh, sorrowing for sin, finds a nest, that is, truth and charity, in the which her birds are done. That is God's work, (so) that the glede bears them not away. We think of God in our heart, and as a sparrow we fly to the house, in flesh we work through charity and as a turtle we have a nest. And what is that nest? . . . . Thine altars, that is height of hope and love, to which we climb loving."

Rolle follows S. Augustine's exegesis closely for this Psalm: but his actual words recall the Metrical Psalter:—

"And soothly every sparrow
Finds him house, wide or narrow,
And the turtle for him a nest
That he may with his birdies rest
Even Thy altars, Lord of mights";

which suggests escape, rest after toil.

His comments on the Psalms are full of this sense of being retrieved, of flight from evil peril, of repose after intense struggle. Sometimes, probably oftenest, it was prompted by his spiritual experiences. But at others, it breathes of a physical escape and rest, such as he might have felt not seldom, when having tramped the moors and climbed those arduous hills—"end-oop" tracks, in modern Yorkshire dialect—he came on some grey, windily-perched little Church, like Gillamoor's, for instance, so fortunately set just above Farndale.

Besides the Psalms, Rolle translated and glossed Canticles from the Old Testament, the Songs of Isaiah, Hezekiah, Moses, Hannah, and the Prayer of Habakkuk, together with the Magnificat from S. Luke. In his comment on the second Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.) there are touches which suggest his tramps over the North Riding: e.g.:—

"*Gall of dragons* is the fell treason of backbiters, the which treason they drink with delight as wine, and pour it out as ale for other men. And

> *venom of snakes,* that is, lasting malice is their incurable drink: for they will not be amended, and if men chastise them, their malice waxes, and they are worse than they were."

We are too apt to forget that the Saints were once children. It is beyond hope that Rolle could really have met dragons; but did he, as a boy, try "chastising" the adders of his native moors, and so discovered that in fact it does make them "worse than they were"?

The work of translation must always differ widely from original and free expression of a writer's own thought, experience and speculation. No one would pretend that the Psalter writings show Rolle's greatest literary gifts, his melody, his lucidity, and what, considering he was the pioneer writer of English prose, may be called his polish.

It is as a writer of Prose Treatises, enriched out of the fulness of his heart and his ever-widening spiritual experience, that he won an inexpugnable place in our literature; and this however long and thoroughly he was forgotten and so neglected. Yet, the *Psalter Commentary* shows that, even within the limits and trammels of translating other men's work, he could find abundant chances for letting his own convictions, thought, feeling and taste escape.

APPENDIX I.

(A.) DE DELECTACIONE IN DEO.

This tract is on leaves 196, 197 of the MS. Thornton, in Lincoln Cathedral Library.

Item, idem de delectacione in Deo
Also of the same
Delight and Yearning of God.

YEARNING and delight of Jesus Christ, that has nothing of world's thoughts, is wonderful, pure, holy and fast; and when a man feels himself in that degree, then is a man circumcised ghostly. When all other business, affections and thoughts are drawn away out of his soul, (so) that he may have rest in God's love, without entangling of other things, the delight is wonderful. It is so high that no thought may reach thereto to bring it down. It is pure when it is not blended with anything that is contrary thereto. And it is fast when it is clean and stable, delighting by itself. Three things make delight in God high. One is restraining of fleshly lust in embracing. Another is restraining or repressing of ill-stirring, of temptation in the will. The third is keeping or upraising the heart in the light of the Holy Ghost, that holds his heart up from all earthly thoughts, (so) that he sets no obstacle in himself against the coming of Christ.

Everyone who covets endless salvation, be he busy night and day to fulfil this love, or else he may not win to love of Christ. For it is high; and all that it dwells in, it lifts above filthy lusts and vile covetousness, and above all affections and thoughts of any bodily things. Two things make our delight pure. One is turning the senses towards intellect. For when anyone turns to delight in his five wits, all as soon, uncleanness enters into his soul. Another is, that intellect be used meekly in ghostly things, as in meditations and orisons and looking into holy books. Therefore, delight that has nought of disordered stirring,[1] and

[1] i.e., thoughts, suggestions.

meekly has stirring in Christ, and in which sensuality is turned to the intellect, all directed and pointed to God, makes a man's soul (be) in rest and security, and aye to dwell in good hope, and to be content with God's rulings without grudging or heaviness of thought, et cetera.

Here ends.

Here ends the song. May he who wrote it be blessed. Amen.

Here begins the Mirror of Holy Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury among the English.[2]

[2] Printed in *Some Minor Works of Richard Rolle*, pp. 94—147. Published by J. M. Watkins.

THE ONENESS OF GOD WITH MAN'S SOUL.

Note: This treatise occurs on leaf 219 of the MS. Thornton in Lincoln Cathedral Library. Another version exists in the MS. Camb. Dd. V. Pepwell (in 1521) ascribed it to Walter Hilton. Horstman notes that fact, and also that Mr. Perry, editing it for the Early English Text Society, ascribed it to Rolle. Horstman (Vol. II., p. xli., *Richard Rolle of Hampole*) writes that it is "probably by Walter Hilton."

Mr. Edmund Gardner, editing, in 1910, Pepwell's rendering, speaks of *The Song of Angels,* as it is there called, as "assigned to him" (Hilton) "with certainty"; but he gives no reasons.

Without doubt, it contains words, or their derivatives, which Horstman (Op. cit. p. xl.) declares to be "peculiar" to Rolle's vocabulary; e.g., never-the-latter, styrringe (for suggestion) delitabill, etc. More important still, its cadence is Rolle's: its standpoint and style recall him rather than Hilton.

Moreover, in the MS. Camb. Dd. V., as in the MS. Thornton, this tract is followed by a poem (rendered here in its place). In the Thornton MS. no author's name is given. In MS. Dd. V., it follows twelve poems which close with the remark, *Expliciunt cantica diuini amoris secundum Ricardum Hampole:* the note at the head of this poem being *Item secundum eundem Ricardum.* Is it possible that *secundum* should have two different meanings here?

The version of the MS. Thornton has been followed, as it has three extra stanzas, and does follow the tract itself, in the MS. Thornton.

While doubt must exist as to its authorship, in the face of conflicting views, it is surely permissible to treat it, until certainty of authorship overthrows the internal evidence of Rolle's hand, as if it were his.

(B.) THE ONENESS OF GOD WITH MAN'S SOUL.

Dear Friend, wit thou well that the end and the sovereignty of perfection stands in very oneness of God and of man's soul, by perfect charity. This end, then, is verily made, when the powers of the soul are re-formed by Grace to the dignity and state of their first condition; that is, when the mind is firmly stabled, without changing and wandering, in God and ghostly things: and when the Reason is cleared from all worldly and fleshly beholdings and imaginings, figures and phantasies of creatures, and is illumined with Grace to behold God and ghostly things; and when the will and affections are purified and cleansed from all fleshly lusts, animal and worldly love, and are inflamed with burning love of the Holy Ghost. But this wonderful oneness cannot be achieved perfectly nor wholly in this life, because of the corruptions of the flesh, but only in Heaven's bliss. Never-the-latter, the nearer that a soul can come in this present life to this oneness, the more perfect it is. For the more it is re-formed by Grace into the image and likeness of its Creator, here, and on this manner wise, the more joy and bliss shall it have in Heaven. Our Lord God is One, Endless Being without Changing; Almighty without failing; Sovereign Wisdom, light, soothfastness without error or mirkness; Sovereign goodness, love, Peace and Sweetness. Then, the more a soul is oned, fastened, conformed and joined to our Lord God, the more stable it is and mighty; the more wise and clear, peaceable, loving and more virtuous; and so it is more perfect. For a soul, that by the grace of Jesus, and by long travail of body and ghostly exercise has overcome and destroyed concupiscence and passions and irrational stirrings within itself, and without in the senses, and that is clad in virtues—as meekness and mildness, patience, soothfastness, ghostly strength and righteousness, continence, wisdom, truth, hope and charity,—then it is made as perfect as it can be in this life. Great comfort it receives of our Lord, not only

inwardly, in the privy substance by the virtue of its oneness with our Lord,—and which lies in knowing and loving God, in the light of ghostly burning of Him, and of transforming of the soul into the Godhead,—but also in many other comforts and savours, sweetness and wonderful feelings in several manners.

After, our Lord vouchsafes to visit His creatures here in earth, and after, the soul profits and waxes in charity, some soul (by virtue of the charity God gives it) is so cleansed that all creatures, all that he hears or sees or feels by any of his wits, turns him into comfort and gladness; and the senses receive new savours and sweetness in all creatures. And right as before the likings of his senses were fleshly, vain and vicious because of the pain of original sin, right so now they are made ghostly and clean, without bitterness and biting of conscience. And this is the goodness of our Lord, that since the soul is punished through the senses, the flesh being partner in that pain, that afterwards the soul is comforted through the senses, and the flesh is fellow with the soul in that comfort and joy, not fleshly but ghostly, as it was fellow in tribulation and pain. This is the freedom and the lordship, and dignity and the worship that a man's soul has over all creatures. The which dignity he may receive by grace here, so that every creature may savour to him as it is: and this is so, when by Grace he sees or he hears or he feels only God in all creatures. On this manner wise a soul is made ghostly in the senses, by abundance of charity that is in the soul's substance.[3]

Also, our Lord comforts a soul by Angels' song. But what that is, it may not be described by any bodily likeness, for it is ghostly, and above all manner of imagination and man's reason. It may be perceived and felt in the soul, but not told. Never-the-latter, I speak thereof to thee as methinks. When a soul is purified by the love of God, illumined by wisdom,

[3] In this Treatise, "substance" is used in its original sense, as that which *is*, in and by itself.

stabled by the might of God, then is the eye of the soul opened to behold ghostly things, as Virtues, Angels and Holy Souls, and heavenly things. Then is the soul able, by cause of (its) cleanness, to feel the touching, the speaking of good Angels. This touching and speaking is ghostly, not bodily. For when the soul is lifted and raised out of sensuality, and out of mind[1] of any earthly things, then, in great fervour of love and light of God, if our Lord vouchsafe, the soul may hear and feel heavenly sound, made by the presence of Angels in loving of God. Not that this song of Angels is sovereign joy of the soul, but a difference that is between a man's soul in flesh, and an Angel, because of uncleanness. A soul cannot hear it save by ravishing in love, and needs for to be purified full clean, and full filled of great charity, ere it were able for to hear heavenly sound. For the sovereign and essential joy is in the love of God by Himself and for Himself; and the secondary is communing with and beholding Angels and ghostly creatures. For, right as a soul, in understanding ghostly things, is often-times touched and made to know through bodily imagination, by working of Angels (as Ezekiel the prophet saw, in bodily imagination, the soothfastness of God's private things) right so, in the love of God, a soul, by the presence of Angels, is raised out of all remembrance of earthly and fleshly things into a heavenly Joy, to hear Angels' Song and heavenly sound, according as charity is more or less. Now then, methinks, that no soul may verily feel Angels' Song nor heavenly sound, save it be in perfect charity. And nevertheless, not all that are in perfect charity have felt it, but only that soul that is purified in the fire of the love of God, so that all earthly savour is burnt out of it, and all men's hindering betwixt the soul and Angels' cleanness is broken and put away from it. Then soothly, may he sing a new song, and soothly may he hear a blissful heavenly sound and Angels' song, without deception

[1] i.e., remembrance.

or feigning. Our Lord knows where that soul is that, for abundance of burning love, is worthy to hear Angels' song. Whoso then will hear Angels' song, and not be deceived by feigning nor by his own imaginations, nor by delusion of the Enemy, it behoves him to have perfect charity, and that is when all vain love and dread, vain Joy and sorrow is cast out of the heart, so that he loves nothing but God, dreads nothing but God, joys and sorrows in nothing but God, or of God. Whoso, by the Grace of God might go this way, he should not err. Never-the-latter, some men, in this matter, are deceived by their own imagination, or by delusions of the Enemy. Some man, when he has long travailed bodily and ghostly in destroying sins and getting virtues, and, peradventure, has got by Grace some bit of rest and clarity in conscience, anon, he leaves off his prayers, readings of Holy Writ and Meditations on the Passion of Christ, and the remembrance of his own wretchedness, and ere he be called of God, he gathers up his wits by violence to seek and to behold heavenly things, ere his eyes be made ghostly by Grace, and by imaginings he over-travails his wits, and by indiscreet travailing turns the brains in his head, and breaks to bits the powers and the wits of the soul and of the body: and then because of his brain's feebleness, it seems to him that he hears wonderful sound and song, and that is nothing else but a phantasy caused by troubling of the brain, just as a man in a frenzy supposes that he hears or sees what no other can; all that is but vanity and phantasy of the head: or else, (it is) by working of the Enemy, who feigns such sound in his hearing. For if a man has any presumption in his phantasies and his working, and thereby falls into indiscreet imagination, as it were a frenzy, and is not taught nor ruled by Grace, nor comforted by ghostly strength, then the devil enters by false illuminations and false sounds and sweetness, and deceives a man's soul. And from this false soil spring

errors and heresies, false prophecies, presumptions and false reasonings, blasphemies, slanderings and many other mischiefs. And, therefore, if thou seest any man (who is) ghostly occupied, fall into any of these sins and these deceptions, or into frenzies, wit thou well that he never heard nor felt Angels' song, nor heavenly sound. For soothly, he that verily hears Angels' song, he is made so wise that he shall never err by phantasy, nor by indiscretion, nor by any sleight of the Devil.

Some men also feel as it were in their hearts a ghostly sound and sweet song of divers matters, and this commonly is good; and sometimes it may turn to deceit. This sound is felt on this wise. Some man sets the thought of his heart only on the Name of Jesus, and steadfastly holds it thereto. In a short time it seems to him that that Name turns him to great comfort and sweetness, and it seems to him that the Name sounds in his heart delightably, like a song, and the virtue[5] of his liking is so mighty, that it draws in his soul's wits thereto. Whoso can feel this sound and sweetness verily in his heart, let him wit well that it is of God: and so long as he is meek, he shall not be deceived. But this is not Angels' song, but it is a song of the soul, by virtue of the Name, and by the touching of good Angels. For when a soul (offers) itself to Jesus, truly and meekly, putting all its trust and its desire in Him, and busily keeps Him in its mind, our Lord Jesus, when He wills, purifies that soul's affection, fills it and feeds it with the sweetness of Himself, and makes His Name, in that soul's feeling, like honey and like song and like anything that is delightable. So that evermore it pleases that soul to cry Jesus, Jesus; and not only it has comfort in this, but also in psalms and hymns and anthems of Holy Church, so that the heart sings them sweetly, devoutly and freely, without any travail of the soul or bitterness, in the same time and tune that Holy Church uses. For the substance

[5] i.e., strength.

of this feeling lies in the love of Jesus, which is fed and enlightened by such manner of songs. Never-the-latter, in this kind of feeling the soul may be deceived by vain-glory, not in that time when the affection sings to Jesus, and loves Jesus in His sweetness, but afterwards when it ceases, and the heart cools from the love of Jesus, then enters in vain-glory.

Also, some man is deceived on this wise. He hears it well said that it is good to have Jesus in his mind, or any other good word of God. Then, he strains his heart mightily towards that name, and, by habit, he has it always near at hand in his mind. Nevertheless, he feels thereby, neither sweetness in his affection, nor light of knowing in his reason, but only a naked minding[6] of God or of Jesus, or of Mary, or of any other good word. Here, deception may be, not because it is ill to have Jesus in mind, on this wise, unless he hold this feeling and this mind—which is only his own working by habit,—to be a special visitation of our Lord, and think it (to be) more than it is.[7] For wit thou well, that a naked remembering or a naked imagination of Jesus, or of any ghostly thing, without sweetness of love in the affection, or without light of knowing in the reason, is but blindness, and a way to deception, if a man hold it, in his own (thought) for more than it is. Therefore, I hold it safer that he be meek in his own feeling, and hold this remembering in no regard, until by habit and using his mind, he can feel the fire of love in his affection, and the light of knowing in his reason. Lo! I have told thee in this matter a little as methinks: not affirming that this suffices, nor that this is the soothfastness[8] in this matter. But if thou thinkest otherwise, or any other man savour by Grace the contrary thereto, I permit the saying and give place to him. It suffices me to live in truth principally and not in feeling.

[6] Remembrance.
[7] Comparing the two versions, this appears to be the meaning.
[8] The whole truth.

(c.) A POEM.[9]

"Thy joy be such a deal, to serve thy God and pay;
For all this world's weal, thou seest it pass away.
Find thou His love to feel, that with thee shall last for aye,
And thy care shall cool, and pain turn all to play.

On Christ cast thou thy thought; hate all wrath and pride,
Remember, He thee bought, with wounds deep and wide:
When thou Himself hast sought, all weal shall thee betide:
Of riches reck thou nought, so that from hell He may thee hide.

They turn their day to night who love this earthly sin;
And slain are in that fight where we our life shall win.
For they that love unright, and therefrom cannot blin[10]
They lose the land of light and in hell sit therein.

Do thou as I thee rede,[11] lifting up thy heart,
Say to Him who was dead, "Christ, my health Thou art":
Sin sinks aye as lead, and far falls from qwert[12]
Therefore, stable thy stede[13] where smiting may not hurt.

Learn to love thy King, Whose love evermore will last,
Have Him in thy thinking, and fasten His love so fast
That for no earthly thing no wisdom may it cast;
Thy song and thy sweeting, He will be at the last.

[9] In the MS. Thornton this poem follows the *One-ness*. Its lines rime doubly, in the middle and at the ends of the lines. It is difficult to find in modern English equivalent rimes.

[10] From an Anglo-Saxon verb, to leave off, or rest.

[11] Counsel.

[12] Sound health.

[13] Place.

Covet thou in Christ thy solace, let His love change thy cheer,[14]
With joy take thou His grace; and sigh by Him to sit near.
Ever seeking His face thy soul shalt thou make clear:
High He settles thy place, if thou this life wilt lere.[15]

Keep thou His biddings tene:[16] hold thee from deadly sin,
Forsake the pleasures of men, that thou His love may win;
Thy heart for Him shall burn, your love shall never twin[17]
Longing He will thee lene[18] to dwell heaven within.

Think thou of His meekness, how pure He was born,
Behold His blood-stained flesh, His head pricked with thorn.
Let not thy love grow less, He found thee all forlorn,—
To serve Him is sweetness, to that we all have sworn.

Fasten thy heart to flee all this world's care,
That thou in rest mayst be; thou salvest thy soul's sore:
His love take it to thee, and love Him more and more,
That thou His face mayest see, when thou from hence shalt fare.

If thou beest in fanding[19] of love thou hast great need,
To steady thee in stabling, and give thee grace to speed.
Thou shalt dwell with thy king and in His love aye feed:
For little have I cunning[20] to tell of His fair-hede.[21]

[14] Face.
[15] Learn.
[16] With pain.
[17] Doubt.
[18] Repay.
[19] Temptation.
[20] Knowledge, skill.
[21] Fairness.

In that love be stede,[22] so that aye thou be loving,
And give Him love to wed[23] that thou with Him wilt stand.
Joy in thy breast is bred when thou with Him art loving,
Thy soul then hath He fed in sweet love for aye burning.

All vanity forsake, if thou His love wilt feel,
To Him thy heart betake, He can it keep full well.
Thy mirth no man may make, of God that is a deal[24]
Thy thought, let it not quake; thy love, let it not cool.

From the bitterness of sin, flee thou fast away,
This world's wickedness see it go not with thee,
This earthly busy-ness that has worked men woe,
Will make thy love the less if thou take it to thee.

We all love something, that has in it knowing's skill,
And therein have liking when it come us till[25]
Therefore, do Christ's bidding, and love Him as He may will,
Whose love has no ending, and Joy with never an ill.

They that love fleshly are likened unto swine,
In filth there will they lie, their fairness will they tine[26]
Their love departs purely, and is put in pine,[27]
Sweeter is love ghostly, that nevermore will dwine.[28]

If thou lovest whilst thou may the king of majesty,
Thy woe wendeth away, thy health hies to thee.
Thy night turns into day, thy bliss must for ever be:
When thou art as I say, I pray thee think on me.

[22] Steadfast.
[23] Pledged.
[24] A part.
[25] To.
[26] Lose.
[27] Torture, misery.
[28] Fail, fade away.

Our thoughts we shall set, together in heaven to dwell,
For there the good have met, that Christ holds from hell,
When we our sins have grett,[29] then tidings may we tell,
That we from far have fet,[30] that love so many feel.

The world, cast it behind, and say " Jesu, my sweet,
Me in Thy love fast bind, and give me grace to greet;
To love Thee, turn my kind;[31] to love Thee I heat[32]
That I Thy love may find that will wry bale well beat.

With love wound me within, and me to Thy light lead,
Make thou me clean from sin, that nought may me dread[33]
As Thou, to save mankind, suffered Thy side to bleed,
Give me wit to win sight of Thee for my mead."

His love is trusty and true to those who loving were,
Since that it first I knew, it kept me from care,
I found it ever new, to teach me God's lore,
Nor now can I ever rue that I have suffered sore.

In love thy heart lift high and fight to fell the fiend;
Thy days shall be undree[34] no sorrow shall thee rend.
When death to thee draw nigh and from hence thou shalt wend,
Thou shalt see Him with thine eye, and come to Christ thy friend."[35]

[29] Wept.
[30] Fetched.
[31] Nature.
[32] Burn.
[33] Make afraid.
[34] Not long, not tedious.
[35] A leaf is here torn out, so there is no ending.

APPENDIX II.

THE FIFTEEN DOOMS.

From the *Cursor Mundi* (Cotton MS. ll. 22437, et seq.)

" Great signs shall our Lord make
For to shew the wicked His wreak;
As it is told by Jeremie
Zorobabel and Isaiah.
Also Jerome says, that men believe well:
Says he found (it) in the book of the Jews.
Whether they shall in a row betide,
Or an interval betwixt them bide,
That he tells us nowhere,
Though a clerk of great lore.
The judgment is of little mercy
So as no one of the felons to spare.
Our Lord shall His powers show
That man on earth shall it know.
Hither now I bid thee draw
All they who of Him stand in awe,
And hearken so to what I shall say
That none empty flees away.
Such sorrowful sight was never before,
That they who bide shall tell of woe.
The first day as I shall explain
Much it is for all to fear.
For there shall fall down from the sky
A bloody rain, a dreary drift,
The earth shall be all red of hue,
Nor saw I ever such a dew.
Children in their mothers' wombs lying
Shall therein make such a crying,
With a high note and loud cry,
' Mercy now, Lord King of Heaven,
To be born we have no mind.

Do something Lord for us to stint it.
Wherefore should we be born to-day,
When all things shall turn so wae?'
Weeping shall they call on Jesu;
'Lord! have mercy on all now.'
The second day to expect, I wis,
It shall be much worse than this.
The stars with their beloved light,
Shall sadly fall from Heaven's height.
None is so well fast of them all
That it shall not, that day, down fall.
And patter shall the rain on the ground,
And then fire-slag, when it is time.
They shall on earth run here and there,
Weeping as if they mortals were.
No word shall they utter until
Every one be fallen down,
Into the abyss beyond sight
And there they shall have lost their light,
And be as black as any coal,
Lord! how may we this then thole,
That are so soiled with our sin,
And as we wounded were therein?
After the second, follows the third,
An uncouth day it shall be shewed.
So that the moon that is so sheen
When it is in its waxing seen,
Shall become red as any blood
Through dread of Him done to death on the rood.
On earth down it shall descend,
But there it shall in no wise land,
But to the sea then shall it run,
And then it shall hide therein,
So as to flee that day of awe,
When Christ shall come Himself to show.
The fourth sign after these three
Shall be a full grisly one to see,
So that the sun that is so bright
And serves this whole world with light,

It shall become most un-fair,
Dim and black, and very hoar:
When it is the fairest on to look,
At mid-day time, as says the Book,
Blacken it shall at that very time,
That none there shall see a stime.[1]
O Lord! full wae shall that man be,
That there shall find no mercy.
Those to whom His wrath He shall show
Shall from that time no gladness know.
Ugly shall be the fifth day,
More than any tongue can say:
All dumb beasts under the sky
Their heads then shall lift on high,
Upon their Lord there to cry,
If they could speak and ask mercy;
Right into the ground shall they run,
For dread, to hide themselves therein.
And then they shall cry with louder voice
Than ten or eleven could now make a noise;
And all for fear of His coming,
That doom shall deem on everything.
The sixth day is ruddy running,
All the world, both dale and dune
Shall all perfectly level be;
The dales uprise, the dunes sink down,
And all this earth, now under heaven
Shall in that day lie all even,
For dread of that Dooms-Man.
Peace shall turn into war;
The earth shall quake, never before so fast,
Tower and town alike down-cast;
No work is so strong, nor any wall
But it, on that day, down shall fall.
Wood and wall quite down shall draw,
For that Dooms-Man's dreadful awe.
Sorrowful shall the seventh sign be,
More than those six that named be.

[1] *Particle* is the most probable meaning.

The trees thrown down shall try with pain
To rise and right themselves again;
The top beneath, the root on high,
Of mirth there, none can spy.
Disagreeably then shall they quake,
Because all the earth shall shake.
Not a leaf of them shall last
When the greatest of them bursts.
Lord! where shall we then rest
When no man knows how to find a nest?
All wan at that time shall we turn
Unless we have some grace to yearn.
Then it behoves all folk to die,
For the sorrow they shall dree.
The eighth sign, it has no match
None foreknew its great vengeance.
From its bed, the sea shall rise
To hide itself, but can nowise.
It shall burst over dale and dune,
So that all things it shall drown.
But he fails us not that this hath told,
That was Moses of time so old.
Up to heaven shall rise the sea,
Therein with force to win entry.
The fishes that are placed therein
That we so often much enjoy,
To earth away then they shall flee
And think that God may not them see.
Then the sea shall draw back again,
Down from the sky on to the land,
Unto her bed she shall return
And there also shall likewise burn.
The ninth shall be both cruel and keen,
Was none such ever before seen.
With speech everything shall complain,
As if with a man's mouth it had been.
I take to witness St. Austin
That telleth what this world shall find.
They shall call on our Lord God:

'Have mercy on us, for Thy might,
Lord God Who lastest for aye,
Thou shalt do us quite away,
To turn us as if nought we were
Lord, let us not forth fare.'
The tenth is worse still than nine.
There is no saint under heaven,
Nor heaven itself that shall not be afraid,
Of Him Who made this middle-earth.

A long description follows here of the terror of the Cherubim and Seraphim, of Saints and Angels, of the dumbness, through fear, of S. Peter, of the parting asunder of Heaven itself, of the escape of the devils from hell, to watch events on earth, and of their prayer to be allowed to return to hell, thus :—

'Caitiffs we are who sorrow more
Than ever in hell we were wont to do.
Yield us again our hostel now,
Reft from us we know not how.
To receive it now, we are full fain,
If we might have our land again.'
The sign of the eleventh day
It is no use not to say;
Sorely shall men be struck with horror.
Winds on every side shall rise,
One against other, fast shall they blow,
There is no tongue that this can show.
The earth it then shall rive in two,
And lift it right out of its place.
The devils then shall be outdriven,
Out of the earth that is thus riven;
Their bodies shall be borne in air,
That sight, it shall be full un-fair.
Then shall the rainbow descend,
In hue like gall it shall be kenned.
With the wind it then shall mix,
And drive all down into hell,

And dump the devils down therein,
In their bale for aye to burn,
And shall bid them to keep there,
And above earth to come no more.
The end is come, a hall have ye,
They come there in bale to be.
Then shall they begin to cry and call,
'Lord God! Father of us all
Let us under the earth be hid,
That we on earth no more be seen.'
The twelfth sign is of sorrow sore,
Through the might of Him Who all things moves.
There is no man on this earth wrought,
That ought to let it out of his thought,
Thus to amend his life the more,
Unto Jesus, Whom our Lady bore.
Heaven shall be locked up again,
None shall be there that go not grieved.
In what manner can we now end
When all things draw thus to an end?
The angels who in heaven shall be
Shall kneel down at Christ's knee,
And shall cry for mercy to their King,
For what they see ready for everything.
For that ruth, they shall be afraid,
They who are set over all this world.
When angels shall so dread this pass,
What shall the sinful do, alas!
The thirteenth shall be so fierce,
More than tongue of man can rehearse.
O! that sorrowful, grisly day,
When Christ's shafts shall flee away.
When all the stones that come to birth
Beneath the sky on this broad earth,
Above the earth and under also
Right down into the abyss far go,
Smiting together with such might,
As thunder does with fire alight.
With hard dints shall they knock then

So that none can feel blithe among men.
With thronging together they shall thrust
That all to pieces they shall burst.
This shall last throughout the day,
The sign of this most sorrowful play.
So that men who beyond that day would bide
Under some hill they shall them hide.
The fourteenth day shall be full ill,
Till all this world shall be made a grill.
A stormy day, all strait with awe,
Both with frost and hail and snow.
Then shall come both thunder and levin,
And drown all that is under heaven.
The clouds into the sea shall run
To hide themselves therein,
That they may flee that day so furious,
Which our Lord shall come to doom.
What shall be the fifteenth day?
As I have found, so shall I say.
Men say, and sooth it may so fall
That it shall be the ending of all.
This middle-earth, welaway!
All to nought shall burn away.
The sea too that enlaps the land,
The waters that run beside the strand,
All shall turn again to nought,
As they first were, ere ought was wrought.
Heaven and earth to be made new,
That shall for ever be lasting true."

THE FIFTEEN DOOMS.

From

The Pricke of Conscience: (Book V. ll. 4733—4817).

"Yet speaks the holy man, St. Jerome,
Of fifteen tokens that shall come
Before Christ's coming, as he says,
The which shall fall in fifteen days.
But whether any other days shall fall,

Between the days, or they shall all
Continually fall, day after day,
St. Jerome says he cannot say.
And yet for certain asserts not he
That the tokens on fifteen days shall be;
But he rehearses the tokens fifteen,
As he them found, and written had seen,
In some books of the Hebrews,
That contain these fifteen days.
But St. Jerome shews not, nor tells
That he found them written anywhere else.
But in the Hebrews' books he them found
And rehearses them as he saw them stand,
Every day, one after other, even,
As ye may hear me name them now.

The first day of those fifteen days
The sea shall rise, as the Book says,
Above the top of every mountain
Full forty cubits for certain,
And in its place even upstand,
As a high hill does on land.

The second day, the sea shall be so low,
That hardly shall men what it is know.

The third day the sea shall seem a plain,
And stand level in his course again,
As it stood first, at the beginning,
Without any more rise or falling.

The fourth day, shall such a wonder be
The most wonderful fishes of the sea
Shall come together and make such growling
That it shall be hideous to man's hearing,
But what that roaring shall signify,
No man may wit, only God Almighty.

The fifth day, the sea shall burn
And all the waters, as they shall run;
And that shall last from the sun-rising
To the time of the sun's down-ganging.

The sixth day, shall spring a bloody dew,
On grass and trees, so shall it show.

On the seventh day, shall buildings down-fall
And great castles and towers withal.

On the eighth day, hard rocks and stones
Shall strike together, all at once,
And each of them shall the other down-cast
And each against other shall hurtle fast;
So that every stone on divers wise
Shall sunder the other in three parts.

On the ninth day, shall great earth-din be,
Everywhere, in every country;
And such great earth-din as shall be then,
Was never heard since the world began.

The tenth day, thereafter to name,
The earth shall be made level and plain,
For hills and valleys shall turned be,
Into a plain made level to see.

The eleventh day, shall men come out
From caves and holes, and wend about,
Like madmen who can nothing ken
And none shall speak to another then.

The twelfth day after, the stars one and all
And the signs set in the heavens shall fall.

The thirteenth day, shall dead men's bones
Be set together, and rise all at once:
And above, on their graves shall stand,
This shall happen in every land.

The fourteenth day, all that liveth then,
Shall die, children, women and men;
For they shall rise with those again,
That before were dead, to joy or to pain.

The fifteenth day, thus shall it betide,
The whole world shall burn on every side,
And this earth, whereon we now dwell,
Unto the uttermost end of hell.
Thus Jerome tells these tokens fifteen,
As he in the Books of the Hebrews had seen.
But for all these tokens that men shall see,
Yet shall no man certain be."

As a commentary on these grim extracts, the following passage from a recent book—*De Dante à Mistral*, by Jules Véran, may be enlightening :—

> " Heaven, Purgatory, Hell furnished the Middle Ages with a rich wonderland. A thousand legends about angels and devils passed from hand to hand. In the long evenings, in the smoky light of an expiring ' dip,' when they were not telling some old-time tale, they talked about the mysteries of the Life beyond. One need hardly say ' mysteries,' because the general run of people mixed the traditions of Scripture and the legends which had gathered round them in one common atmosphere of faith and credulity. But, Paradise with its spiritual joys attracted these simple souls' attention less than hell did, with its terrifying exhibitions and its multifarious penalties, so easily represented by popular images which all could understand. The eternal contemplation of God, attainment of Truth, the Angels' song, the harmony of the spheres were themes which hardly could reach the average intelligence, preachers could not dilate much upon them. But the cauldron in which devils, armed with forks, roasted the damned, there was something which appealed to every imagination."[2]

[2] " Le ciel, le purgatoire, l'enfer ont fourni au Moyen Age un merveilleux très riche. Mille histoires d'anges et de diables circulaient. Dans les longues veillées, à la lumière fuligineuse d'un lumignon, quand on ne contait pas quelque

The element of truth in this lively statement, buttressed as it is by mediæval sculpture and by not a little painted glass, may suggest that it is a remarkable thing, not that Rolle should ever have dwelt luridly on the fate of the lost, but, seeing that he wrote for "simple souls," for just those of that "average intelligence," that he should have done so so seldom; while, as some may think, in and out of season, he insisted on the special themes, which, if M. Véran were right, the majority of his hearers were so incapable of grasping.

histoire gauloise, on parlait des mystères de l'au-delà. Il ne faudrait même pas dire les mystères, car le populaire confondait dans la même foi et la même crédulité les traditions des Ecritures et les légendes qui s'étaient formées autour d'elles. Mais le Paradis avec ses joies spirituelles retenait moins l'attention de ces âmes simples que l'enfer, avec ses spectacles terrifiants et ses supplices variés qui pouvait être décrits avec des images vulgaires que tout le monde comprenait. L'éternelle contemplation de Dieu, la possession de la vérité, la musique des anges, l'harmonie des sphères étaient des thèmes peu accessibles à la moyenne des intelligences, et que les prédicateurs ne pouvaient longuement développer; mais le chaudron dans lequel les diables avec leurs fourches font rôtir les damnés, voilà qui parlait aux imaginations." (Op. cit. p. 101.)

APPENDIX III.

EXTRACTS FROM ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL WRITINGS OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

(A.) HALI MEIDENHAD.

I. Appeal to a Maiden to embrace the Religious Life.

"'What is now this lore that thou takest so deeply and teachest me earnestly?' 'Lo this, "'Forget thy folk and thy Father's house.' . . . And is she not really cast down and into slavedom drawn, who—of so very high place, of so much dignity and such worship as it is to be God's spouse, Jesus Christ's bride, the beloved one of the Lord to Whom all things bow, of all the world the lady as He is the Lord; like Him in wholeness, stainless as He is . . . . . so free of thought that she need think of naught save her Beloved, to please Him with true love? For He will care for her, who has committed to Him all that she needs, while she rightly loves Him with true faith,—Is she not, then (as I erewhile said) sorely cast down and drawn into slavedom, who from so great exaltation and so blessed freedom, shall (a)light so low into man's slavedom, so that she has naught free of herself, and shall barter for a man of clay the heavenly Lord, and lessen her (own) ladyship by how much her latter (husband) were of less worth and possessed less than her former: and from God's bride and His free daughter (for both together she is) becomes a man's slave and his thrall; to do and suffer all that he likes, however evilly it fits her: and from that blessed security she was in, and still might be in God's warding, puts herself into so many cares, to trouble after so many things; to thole vexations and wraths and shames again and again; to endure so many woes

for such scant hire as the world ever pays in the end. Is she not verily cast down? Is not this enough slavedom, set against that freedom she had when she was Sion's daughter?"

I. B. *The Woes of the wedded wife.*

(For the most part, these are too exactly and vividly described to be reproduced here. But this passage of her minor woes,—the writer seeming to derive some sly enjoyment from them,—can be quoted.)

"And what, if further I ask, though it seem foolish, how stands it with that wife who, when she comes in, hears her bairns screaming, sees the cat at the flitch, and the hound at the hide? Her cake burns on the stone, and her calf is sucking:[1] the crock runneth over into the fire, and the churl chides. Though it be a foolish tale, Maiden, it ought to egg thee strongly therefrom, for she thinks it not foolish that bears it. That happy maiden that has taken herself out of such slavedom, as God's free daughter, and His Son's spouse, need suffer nought of such things. Therefore, blessed maiden, forsake all such sorrow for unnameable meed, as thou oughtest to do without any payment."

II. Admonition to serve God wholeheartedly.

"Serve God alone: and all things shall for thee turn to good. And take (betake) thee to Him truly, and thou shalt be free from all worldly vexations, nor may any evil harm thee. . . . And such sweetness thou shalt find in His love and in His service, and have so much mirth thereof and liking in thine heart that thou wouldest not change that (state) thou livest in for to be a crowned queen. So gracious is our Lord that He wills not that His chosen be without meed here; for so much comfort is in His Grace that everything fits (suits) them that they see, and though it seem to other men that they suffer hardships, it grieveth them

[1] i.e., helping itself out of the milk-pan.

not, but seemeth to them soft; and they have more delight therein than any other hath in pleasure of the world. This our Lord giveth them here as an earnest of the eternal meed that shall come thereafter. Thus have God's friends all the fruit of this world, which they have forsaken, in wonderful wise. And Heaven at the end."

III. The worthlessness of worldly pleasures.

"Ask these queens, these rich countesses, these proud ladies of their way of life. Truly, verily, if they bethink them rightly, and acknowledge truth, I shall have them for witnesses; they lick honey from thorns: they buy all that sweetness with a double portion of bitter things; and in this writing that shall further be shown openly. It is nowhere near all gold that shines there: yet none knows but themselves what painfully pierces them oftentimes."

IV. Conflict of flesh and intellect.

"Every will of the flesh . . . is the fiend's arrow. But it wounds thee not except it fasten upon thee, and stay with thee so long that thou wouldest that thy will were brought to work (it). While thy wit stands firm and chastens thy will, so that thy longing carry thee not to that which pleases thee, it harms thee not a whit, nor fouls thy soul; for wit is her shield under God's grace. While the shield is whole, that is the wisdom of thy wit, so that it neither break nor bend, though thy false fleshly will be thereunder and would (have) its pleasure, the fiend's arrows fly away again on to himself. And see wherefore. Our body's longing is the fiend's foster-child; our wit is God's daughter: and both are within. Therefore, there is a fight, and must needs ever be; for while we dwell here, war never ceases between these two."

IV. B. *A plea for Brother Ass.*

"Our flesh is our foe and lowers and harms us as often as it fouls us. But if she (maidenhood) guard

it without breach, clean, it is our very good friend and helper, a true hireling; for in and through it, thou dost earn, Maiden, to be the angels' equal in the high bliss of heaven; and with good right (?), if in thy vulnerable flesh, thou livest after their way without breach. Angels and maidens are even in virtue of maidenhood might, though blessedness yet divides them asunder. And though their maidenhood be the blesseder now, thine is the harder to hold, and shall with more meed be repaid thee."

V. Detachment.

"Therefore, woe is to him, as S. Austin saith, that is tied with too great love to any earthly thing; for ever is that sweetness bought with a double portion of bitterness: and a false joy with many a sore[2] pain."

VI. The Spouse of spouses.

"If thou wilt have a husband that hath much beauty, take Him at Whose loveliness the sun and moon wonder; upon Whose Face the angels are never overfull of looking: for when He giveth fairness to all that is fair in heaven and earth, much more beyond all comparison, hath He kept for Himself. And though He is thus of all things fairest, He accepts blithely and clips sweetly the loathliest of all, and makes them sevenfold sheener than the sun."[3]

VII. Pride.

"If thou hast, with maidenhood, meekness and mildness, God is within thine heart. But if there be presumption or any pride in it, He is an outlaw, for these cannot anyways bed in one heart; they must not dwell together in heaven. Thence God cast her (pride), as soon as she was born; and as she knew not by what way she came there, so can she nevermore find her

[2] "Sore" is the reading of the Cotton MS. The Bodleian MS. preserves the antithesis by writing *true* for *sore*.

[3] Cf. the *Luve ron* of Thomas de Hales.

way thither again. . . . Preserve thyself, Maiden, against her. She was born of a pure kin, as equal with angels, and in purest breasts she breedeth yet. The best, she has assailed: and well may she hope to be conqueror of man who overcame an angel. She is not in clothes, nor outwardly, in parti-coloured dress; though otherwhile this is the mark and proof of her. But under white or black, and as well under grey as under green and vair, she hideth in the heart. So soon as thou tellest thyself thou art better than another, be it for whatsoever it may, or hast contempt of any one, and thinkest unfittingly and scornfully of aught that one says or does to thee, thou dost mar thy maidenhood, and breakest thy wedlock with God, and hast offspring of His foe."

VIII. Over-confidence.

"Therefore blessed Maiden, Spouse of God's Son, be not too full of trust in thy maidenhood, without (i.e. unless thou hast) other good and moral forces, and, beyond all, mildness and meekness of heart, after the pattern of that Maiden, blessed above all others, Mary, God's Mother."

IX. Our Lady.

"Though she was full of all good virtues, only of her meekness she said and sang to Elizabeth,—for my God beheld His handmaiden's meekness. . . . . Take heed, Maiden, and understand hereby that more for her meekness than for her maidenhood she believed that she found grace of our Lord. To all maidenhood, meekness is worth much; and maidenhood without it is vile and unworth; for so is a maiden in her maidenhood without meekness, as is unlighted oil in a lamp. . . . . Have ever in thine heart the Blessedest of Maidens, and the Mother of maidenhood; and aye beseech her that she enlighten thee, and give thee love and strength in maidenhood to follow her virtues."

X. The battle's end.

"If thou dost answer thy body's desire and the fiend's temptation, he shall with shame flee from thee. And if, utterly, after this, quickly enough, he stands firm and holds on in tormenting thy flesh and pricking thine heart, thy Lord God endures His doing so to increase thy meed; for, as S. Paul saith, none is crowned but whoso truly fights in that fight, and with strong combating overcomes her flesh: for then is the devil overthrown with his own trick, shamefully... If God wills to crown thee, He will, full well, let the evil one assail thee, that therethrough thou mayest earn crown upon crown. Therefore, it is thy greatest good, that when he grieves thee most, and wars madlier against thee with temptation, thou shouldest hide thyself well under God's wings; for, in spite of his teeth, he, by this war, gets ready for thee the bliss and the crown of the chosen of Christ. And may Jesus Christ give thee, through His blessed Name, and to all that forsake love for man of clay, to be His beloved, and grant that their hearts may so hold on to Him, that neither fleshly urgings, nor the fiend's temptation, nor any of his earthly limbs (imps), war against their hearts, nor wrench them out of the way they are going along. And may He so help them to hie towards heaven, until they be raised up there so that their bridal shall last for ever, there where all that is blessed for ever is, with the Blessed Bridegroom, from Whom all happiness descends. Amen."

(B.) A SONG ON THE PASSION.

(From the Egerton MS.).

"Summer is come and winter gone,
The days begin to grow long,
And the fowls every one,
Joy themselves with song;
Me so great a sorrow binds

In spite of joy that one finds
In the land,
All for a Child
Who is so mild
Of hand.

That Child Who is so mild and fine,
With mighty mind also,
In woods and on the hills has He
From time to time sought me.
For sake of apple from a tree,
Fastened hath he found me
In bonds;
He brake the bond
That was so strong
With His wounds.

That Child Who was so mild and fine,
To me did lout all low;
He, for me, to the Jews was sold,
They noways could Him know.
Let us, therefore, said they,
Nail Him up upon a tree,
On a hill;
But first we will
Put Him to shame
For a while.

Jesus is that Child's Name,
King of all the lands.
Of that King they did make game,
Smote Him with their hands,
To try Him: upon the tree
Gave Him two wounds and three,
With their hands.
Of bitter drink
They sent Him
An offering.

Death He took on the rood-tree,
—The Life of us all—
Nowise other might it be,
Unless we should all boil
And boil in the depths of hell
Were we never so sweet
Withal:
Nor could castle nor could tower
Save us,
Nor a hall.

Maid and Mother who stood,
Mary full of grace,
Oh! He let the tears of blood
Fall in that place;
As His blood ran down the tree
Changed were His flesh and blood,
And His Face.
Asunder was He drawn
As a deer is torn
In the chase.

Death He took, the sweet Man,
So high upon the rood;
He washed our sins everyone
Away with His sweet blood;
Like a flood He lighted down,
Broke the gates of that prison
Where it stood;
And chose them out
Who were good.

He rose again on the third day,
And sat Him on His throne:
He will come on Doomsday,
To judge us everyone.

Groan he may and weep for aye
The man who lawless dies
Alone.
Grant us, Christ
To rise where Thou
Art gone. Amen.

(c.) A LUVE RON.

(This Poem, from a MS. belonging to Jesus College, Oxford, is printed in *An Old English Miscellany*, edited by Richard Morris for the E.E.T. Society. The poem appears to have been written between 1240—1245.)

" A maid of Christ eagerly bade me
That I should make her a song of love.
From whence she might best learn
To take another true love,
The truest of all men born,
Who best could guard a woman;
I will nowise refuse her
But as best I can inform her.

Maiden, here thou canst behold
The world's love is nought but a race:
In mani-fold wise is it beset,
Fickle and evil and weak and false.
Those thanes who here were so bold
Have glided away as the winds pass.
Under the sod they are lying cold,
And wilt like the meadow's grass.

There are no men born and alive
That here can stand steadfast;
For here they have sorrows that rive
And leave no quiet or rest.
Towards their end they blithely hie,
Last here but a little while,
Pain and death will sweep them away,
When they deem they are living best.

None is so rich and none so free
But he soon shall go hence away:
Nor ever may his warrant be
Gold nor silver, vair nor grey.
Be he never so swift he cannot flee,
Nor preserve his life by one day;
Thus is this world, as thou mayest see,
Like a shadow that glides away.

This world fares like a passing show
When one doth come another shall go;
Who was before is now behind,
Who once was loved is loathèd now.
Therefore, he acts as though he were blind
Who to this world his love doth give;
You may see the world pass out of mind
As wrong goes forward and right goes behind.

Therefore the love which here cannot last
Thou trustest it at a ruinous cost.
Also when away it hath passed,
It is false, unsteady, unsound;
And froward in every time and place,
It is sorrow enough while it can last:
No man is so great that he can ward off the end;
But shall fade away like a leaf on the bough.

Momentary is the love of man.
Now he loveth, now he is sad:
Now he cometh, now he departs,
Now he is wroth, now he is glad.
His love is here, and anon afar,
Now he loveth one whom he chid;
Never can he be faithful found,
What he trusted, with that he is mad.

If man be rich in worldly weal,
It makes his heart smart and ache;
If he fear that one will steal
Then doth he pine o' nights awake.

Much and many his thoughts grow,
How he without fail may get to know;
The end which his care will heal
Is death which all will from him deal.

Where is Paris, and where Helen,
Who were so bright and fair of face,
Amadas, Tristram and Dido,
Iseult, and all that race?
Hector with his sharp household,
And Cæsar, rich in this world's gold?
They have passed out of this world,
As an arrow from the bow-string flies.

Of them it is as if never they were,
Of them, men have wonders told;
Were it not pity such things to hear,
How they were with pain killed,
And what when living here they tholed
All their heat turned to cold,
Thus this world is a false show,
And he's a fool that trusts it so.

Though he were as rich a man
As Henry our King;
And as fair as Absalom,
Who had on earth no peer,
Just as soon his pride is gone;
In the end not worth a herring.
Maid, if thou longest after a Lover,
I will shew thee the one true King.

A sweet One, didst thou but know
The good virtues of this Child
He is fair and bright of hue,
Of gladsome face of manners mild;
Of lovesome pleasure, of trust most true,
Free of heart, of wisdom great,
Thou wouldest never need to rue,
If thou puttest thyself in His hold.

He is the richest man in land,
As wide as a man can send his voice;
All things lie within His Hand,
East and west, north and south.
Henry King of England
Holds from Him, and to Him boweth.
Maid, to thee He sends His message,
And wills that He be known to thee.

He asks not with thee lands nor folk,
Vair, gray fur, nor ruddy robe.
Of all that He hath no need,
He is a rich and wealthy man.
If to Him thou wouldest offer love,
And become His lover,
He would give thee such apparel
As nor King nor Kaiser hath.

What tellest thou of any house
That wise Solomon did build?
Of jasper, sapphire or pure gold,
And of many another stone?
It is fairer many-wise,
More than I can ever tell,
Maid, this mansion is promised thee,
If that thou beest His love.

It stands upon a hill secure,
So that fail it never can:
Nor can sapper undermine it
Nor ever break up its ground-wall.
There within is such evil's remedy,
Bliss and joy and glee and song,
This mansion, Maid, is promised thee
And every joy thereon.

There no friend can flee from friend,
Nor any one lose his rights.
There is no hate nor any wrath,
Nor pride, nor envy of any wight.

All of them shall with the angels play,
Make peace and concord in heavenly Light.
Maid, are they not in a good way
Who well love our Lord?

No man may nor can Him see
As He is in His Might,
And then without great bliss be,
When he sees our Lord with sight.
This vision is all joy and glee,
He is day without any night,
Maid, were he not right happy
Who might dwell with such a Knight?

He hath given thee a treasure
That is better than gold or stuff.
And He bids thee close thy bower,
And wills thou guard it well enough;
Against thieves, and robbers and plunderers,
Thou must be watchful and very swift:
Thou art sweeter than any flower
Whilst thou keepest thy citadel.

It is a gem-stone, brought from afar,
No better foundation is under heaven.
It is before all others elect,
It healeth all the wounds of love.
Well indeed were that life born
That could guard this all the time.
For if thou shouldest lose it but once,
Never shalt thou find it again.

This stone that I tell thee of,
Maidenhood is it called:
It is a dear-worthy gem,
Bearing a price beyond all price.
It brings thee without a stain
To the joy of Paradise;
Whilst thou dost guard it whole
Thou art sweeter than any spice.

What speakest thou of any stone
That has either virtue or price?
Of amethyst or chalcedon
Of jacinth or topaz,
Of jasper, sapphire or sard,
Emerald, beryl or chrysophrase?—
Above all other gem-stones
This is the most precious in every place.

Maiden, as I have thee told,
The gem-stone of thy bower
It is better an hundred-fold
Than the rest, of any colour.
It is made of heaven's own gold,
And is full of finest love;
All who can must guard it,
It shines so bright in heaven's bower.

When my counsel thou dost ask
In choosing thee a lover,
I will do as thou dost ask,
To find the best I know.
Nor, Maid, doth he an evil deed
Who of the two takes one,
Unless without the need smallest,
He takes the worst and leaves the best.

This rime, Maid, now I send thee
Open, without a seal;
Unroll it, now I bid thee,
Without book, learn it piecemeal.
Very courteous be thou too,
To teach it to other maidens well.
Who ever knows it to the end
Shall find it stand her in good stead.

When thou sittest full of longing
Draw forth this same script.
With sweet voice shalt thou go, it singing
And shalt do all it biddeth.

To thee He hath sent a greeting,
May God Almighty be with thee,
And let thee come to be His bride,
High in heaven where He sitteth.

And may He give a happy end
To him who wrote this very script."

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